THE LONG MAY DAY

By Edward Aveyard

Preface 2

I enjoyed *A Complete Unknown*, the biopic of Bob Dylan, but I left questioning what the kernel was of the film. I began to think that a film about Ewan MacColl, whose music I had known since being introduced by my uncle in my late teens, would be more interesting. After a few months of thinking this, I eventually decided to test my theory.

This required research. Ewan MacColl lived a very full life and there was so much about him that no film could cover it all. My first draft began with the May Day of 1926 and the General Strike, and worked through Ewan's life from there, but this draft became too long from covering his life bit by bit.

I remembered a YouTube video of a 1984 interview by David Boulton, the Quaker peace activist, which included clips throughout Ewan's long career. This was shortly after his 70th birthday concert and I remember that it ended with some words about how, even though his political ambitions had not come to much in his life, the struggle had been marvellous nonetheless. This appealed to me on two levels. First, who doesn't want to have fun at the same time as pursuing a noble goal (as Ewan saw it)? Second, the difference in approach between the two men resonated with me. I enjoy philosophy and I could imagine some good conversations between a Quaker pacifist and a Marxist-Leninist.

Special thanks go to Doc Rowe for his insights into the life of Ewan MacColl and his ideas for development.

The title is a tongue-in-cheek reference to "The Long May Day", one of the best British films ever. My script has virtually nothing in common with that script. Perhaps the only parallel is that, just as Barry Keefe completed his project at the end of the Good Friday to Easter Sunday holiday, so I am completing the second draft at the end of the May Day holiday in 2026.

1 INT. UNION TAVERN, KING'S CROSS, LONDON. 4TH MAY 1984. 1

A smoke-filled room upstairs at a pub. EWAN MacCOLL (69) and PEGGY SEEGER (48) are seated at the front. EWAN is dressed is a short-sleeved checked shirt with the top button undone. PEGGY is wearing a t-shirt. CALLUM MacCOLL (20) is sitting apart from his parents at the front and holding a classical guitar. The audience is silent in awe. CALLUM strums some simple chords whilst his parents sing.

EWAN MacCOLL & PEGGY SEEGER
(singing together)

Every day the smooth-faced pundits forecast on the box:
'The miners' strike is lost,' they say, 'and Scargill's on the rocks.'
Lies, defamation, misinformation, this is the testing time -
He kept faith with the men who elected him and that is a major crime.

Every time there's a strike in Poland the lads at the BBC
And Thatcher's mob weep crocodile tears.
Hurrah for democracy!
The Sun and The Mail both joyfully hail the Poles' solidarity;
Let British workers go on strike, they sing in a different key!
For solidarity's good for Poles ... but not for you and me!

There is a round of applause. However, a few members of the audience do not clap and they exchange awkward glances. A MAN puts his coat on.

MAN
(quietly to his mate)
He doesn't change, does he?

In a worn jacket with a yellow "Coal Not Dole" sticker, a REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE KENT NUM (40s), steps up to the front. He looks exhausted , but he stands tall as he moves to address the whole room.

KENT NUM REP
(an accent that sounds more northern than Kent)
I just want to say... on behalf of the Kent coalfield, thank you. Thank you for coming tonight, and thank you for your inspiring singing, Ewan and Peggy and Callum.

He turns to face the crowd, gesturing to the room full of “Coal Not Dole” stickers.

KENT NUM REP
But most of all, thank you to you lot. They’re trying to starve us out in the villages, but when we see our fellow socialists marching on May Day, when we see men who have their own battles to fight putting their hands in their pockets for us... well, that’s the one thing Thatcher and McGregor didn't account for. That’s solidarity. And it’s the only thing that’s going to see us through to the end.

There is a roaring applause. He turns to EWAN, extending a hand that is thick-calloused. EWAN takes it, their grip firm. He holds the handshake for a beat, with EWAN’s head cocking slightly as he studies the REP’s face.

EWAN
(A ghost of a smile)
I appreciate the words, comrade. I hope that this struggle produces a few new songs for future generations to sing.

KENT NUM REP
Well, there’s that cassette of yours to make a start on that.

EWAN
You know, listening to you just now, I wouldn’t guess that you’re from the Garden of England. You sound like you’re from a bit further north than Kent.

KENT NUM REP
(Laughing)
Aye, we get told that every day in Aylesham. It’s a village of what they used to call “industrial gypsies”. Everyone says how their parents are from Fife or Lancashire or somewhere in Wales.

The REP leans in, gesturing toward the stage where CALLUM is adjusting his guitar strap.

KENT NUM REP
I’ve heard about that "Policy" of yours here at the Singers’ Club. I hear that you’re quite strict with it: only singing in your own dialect. But haven’t you sung a few songs in Scots?

PEGGY steps forward, her eyes sparking with a sharp, defensive wit.

PEGGY
(American accent)
Don’t look at him! I’m the one who introduced that policy. I got so sick of hearing English singers who’d never seen a blade of grass mangling American songs, singing about the "lonesome prairie" in a Cockney accent, that I had to put a stop to it. I didn’t come all the way to England to hear American songs done badly.

The REP nods slowly, looking back at EWAN with a newfound understanding.

KENT NUM REP
Well, it makes sense, but I’m glad that you made those records of the old Scots songs. My father moved us down to the Kent coalfield after the General Strike. 1926. He was blacklisted in the Scottish pits and, like a lot of men, had to go somewhere they needed new miners and didn’t know their reputations.

EWAN’s expression shifts.

EWAN
Funny, that’s a bit like me. My parents were both Scots too, but they moved to Salford. My father was an iron moulder from Camelon in Stirlingshire; my mother from Auchterarder in Perthshire. They never let the language go. There was always singing at our house, especially at Hogmonay.

EWAN looks down at the hand he just shook, then out at the smoke-filled room.

EWAN
(Voice dropping)
You know, my father... he lived until 1947 with his lungs rotted and worn out. But in my mind, he really died in 1926.

The REP looks at him, the noise of the club fading into the background.

KENT NUM REP
How’s that then?

EWAN

Because that was the year they broke his spirit. When the strike failed, he lost hope and he also lost any chance of keeping a job again. He spent the rest of his life just waiting for his body to realise the light had already gone out. 1926 was a long year… But you don't need me to tell you this.

2 **INT. TRAM IN SALFORD, 1926** **2**

This is back in time to when EWAN MacCOLL was known as JIMMY MILLER. JIMMY (11), dressed in a sailor outfit, and his father, WILL MILLER (30s), a short and broad-shouldered man with black hair and in a suit of rough brown cloth, are standing on a crowded tram. WILL is holding on tightly as the tram swings. JIMMY holds on to his father. A MAN WITH ONE ARM recognises WILL and smiles.

MAN WITH ONE ARM
(Lancashire English)
Give us a song, Will. It'll take our minds off the tram.

WILL
(Lanarkshire Scots)
Ye're a fan of the Bard, I recall. What shall we sing? Afton Water? The Silver Tassie?

MAN WITH ONE ARM
The Devil's away wi' the Exciseman.

WILL
(correcting)
The De'il's Awa' wi' th' Exciseman.

A few others gather around. Some of them try to join in as WILL bellows.

WILL
(singing)
The deil cam fiddlin thro' the toon, and danc'd awa wi the Exciseman,
And ilka wife cries, 'Auld Mahoun, I wish you luck o' the prize, man!'

The deil's awa, the deil's awa, the deil's awa wi' the Exciseman,
He's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa, he's danc'd awa wi' the Exciseman!

JIMMY blushes and does not smile. He turns his head away. As more and more people on the tram sing along, JIMMY frowns more.

3 EXT. SALFORD TOWN SQUARE, 1926 3

A procession of brass and silver bands enter the square, playing “England Arise”. These are followed by trade unions with banners reading “UNITY IS STRENGTH”, “UNITED WE STAND – DIVIDED WE FALL”, “SOLIDARITY IS STRENGTH” and “WORKERS OF ALL LANDS UNITE”. They are followed by a band, playing “Felix Kept on Walking”. Then there is a group of comedians dressed to look like apes, beer barrels, clowns and skinny versions of circus strongmen, and there are young women in their Whitsun finery with spring flowers. Finally, there is a team of four horses drawing carts, which children clamber to get a ride on.

A cheer arises from the crowds lining the route. A man in a suit, BEN TILLET, stands atop a Co-op coal cart.

WILL and JIMMY move closer in the crowd. WILL shakes the hand of a large man with a thick red moustache and a watch-chain. They then turn to listen to TILLET’s speech.

TILLET
Comrades, you have most likely heard the news that the coal subsidy is to be ended today. The Mining Federation is not going to let its members down. They will not accept a penny off the pay nor an hour on the day!

There is a roar of approval.

TILLET
This is the time for the whole trade-union movement to stand behind the miners. If they are to be locked out by the pit owners, then the whole working class must strike in solidarity with the miners.

An even bigger roar follows.

TILLET
We all remember what happened five years ago, when the Triple Alliance turned into the Cripple Alliance and the miners were left at the mercy of their owners. There must be no repeat of that. United we stand and divided we fall!

Cheers resume, but TILLET continues.

TILLET
This is why our Trade Union Congress has

called a General Strike until the pit-owners restore salaries to the levels that they have been at before this subsidy ended.

JIMMY motions to WILL to ask some questions.

JIMMY
(Lancashire English)
What does it mean that there'll be a General Strike?

WILL
It means everyone out – the whole working class, all together.

JIMMY
Does that mean I don't have to go to school?

WILL
Well, the miners' bairns willnae be at school. They'll be too busy picking at coal-heaps to feed theirselves.

JIMMY
I don't like school. I'd sooner be with them.

WILL grimaces silently.

JIMMY
One of the teachers, Miss Tate, has a go at me when you're on strike. Her face… it goes crimson at times when she's moaning about strikers' children being idle.

WILL
(serious)
Look! If we win this strike, Miss Tate won't dare to say a word to you again. She'll be more scared of you than you are of her.

JIMMY smiles. The crowd applauds again in the background.

4 EXT. BACK ENTRY BEHIND MILLER HOUSEHOLD 4

It is the middle of a sunny day. JIMMY is playing football with his mates, ALEC, DAVE, KILLUS and TOMMY. After a few minutes, JIMMY stops and stands.

JIMMY
I'm hungry. I'll just be back in a minute.

JIMMY runs inside his house.

5 **INT. MILLER KITCHEN** **5**

There is a picture of Lenin above the kitchen mantelpiece. WILL is sat around his table with six other men, all dressed in cheap brown suits. One of them is banging his fist on the table. When JIMMY appears, he stops suddenly.

WILL half-rises from his seat and points his thumb in the direction of the door that JIMMY just came through.

JIMMY senses the seriousness and leaves again, without any food.

6 **INT. UNION TAVERN, KING'S CROSS, LONDON. 4TH MAY 1984.** **6**

EWAN claps a hand on the REP's shoulder, pulling him back into the circle. EWAN hands the REP a cassette.

EWAN

I'll give you a copy of our latest cassette, done by the three of us. It's called "Daddy, what did you do in the strike?" – just like from the war.

KENT NUM REP

Ah, that's clever. You know, I bet that kids in the future will ask that to their parents and grandparents: they'll want to know if whose side they were on in this.

EWAN

All proceeds go to the NUM. As the NUM is you, you can have it for free. It wouldn't make sense for you to pay us and for us to send the money back to you, would it?

KENT NUM REP
(flattered)

Thank you very much. Money is tight at present, but I'll enjoy listening to this, and I'll play it for all my mates too.

The REP turns to face CALLUM

KENT NUM REP
(polite)

Hello, Callum. Nice to meet you… So you're on this cassette. Is any of the rest of your family on it?

CALLUM

No, it's just me on that one. We can't always

get the whole family to agree.

PEGGY
(Scoffing softly)
Some problems unite us more than others, don’t they?

CALLUM
I’d like us all to work together on something one day, but the day’s not come yet.

KENT NUM REP
Ey! There’s still a long way to go with this battle.

EWAN
Well, I’ll keep sending my support all the time this strike lasts. If you’re still going at Christmas, I’ll still be playing for you and sending money. If you’re still going at my birthday, I’ll still send money.

CALLUM
(surprised)
Dad! Your birthday’s in January.

KENT NUM REP
Just in time for General Winter to ride in and deliver victory to the miners. (laughs to himself)

There is a pause.

PEGGY
I can’t believe that you’ve agreed to do that interview for your birthday, Ewan.

CALLUM
(surprised)
What interview?

PEGGY pauses to see if EWAN will answer first.

PEGGY
(quickly)
With Granada Television, up in Manchester. David Boulton.

CALLUM
What’s that for?

PEGGY
I don’t know. I’d rather have some birthday cake than see Ewan interrogated on ITN.

EWAN
Boulton’s alright, Peggy. I respect his work with CND and campaigning for peace. He’s one of the better journalists – which is a bit like being the cleanest man in a coal mine, I suppose.

He smiles at the KENT NUM REP.

EWAN
He’ll ask the wrong questions, of course. He’s got that Quaker streak: too much 'conscience' and not enough 'class.' But at least he listens. Most of them just wait for their turn to speak.

KENT NUM REP
Do they have any good songs, the Quakers?

PEGGY
They used not to believe in singing at all, so probably not.

CALLUM tsk-tsks.

CALLUM
What use is a revolution when you can’t sing?

PEGGY
Ah! Now you’re quoting the greats.

CALLUM looks aside. The REP shakes the hands of EWAN, PEGGY and CALLUM, and then leaves.

7 INT. ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, FOYER, NIGHT, 1985 7

BRUCE DUNNET (60) and IAN MacGREESON (44), both tall and muscular men, walk in the Hall and survey the surroundings.

Near the grand staircase, the MacColl clan forms a loose circle.

KIRSTY MacCOLL (25) stands slightly apart, leaning against a pillar. She looks every inch the ‘80s pop star: big hair, leather jacket, a cigarette held with casual defiance.

NEILL (25) and CALLUM (21) are dressed in dark suits that look slightly borrowed, huddled together. NEILL is checking his watch; CALLUM is hummed-tuning a melody, his fingers ghosting over an invisible fretboard.

PEGGY SEEGER moves through the centre of them with a rolled-up banner. Clinging to her is KITTY (11), who looks tired and listless.

DOC ROWE arrives in beige jacket, carrying several bags.

PEGGY
Doc, you should really should have asked us for help. I've two strong lads here.

DOC
It's quite all right, Peggy. It's all light stuff for cameras.

KITTY becomes more interested at the mention of cameras.

KITTY
(to DOC)
Are you filming all of Dad's birthday?

DOC
Oh! Hello, Kitty. Yes, I am. It's great to be here. There should be quite a lot of people.

KITTY
(precisely)
Have you come down *especially?*

DOC
Yes. I live at Sheffield. I'm sleeping on the floor of a professor's centre. He's a professor who asks Yorkshire miners if they still pronounce "coal" as "coils".

KITTY giggles.

KITTY
Funny.

PEGGY looks down at her list of jobs.

PEGGY
Let's get a picture of this banner on stage before everyone else arrives!

PEGGY turns to NEIL and CALLUM and motions for help.

PEGGY
Now, Neil and Callum, let's get this put up!

NEIL and CALLUM dutifully take the banner and walk

towards the stage.

PEGGY, KITTY, KIRSTY and DOC glance to the stage. The banner says in huge letters, “SUPPORT THE MINERS!”

DOC
That’s the cause of the moment… I can get that in nicely.

DOC takes a few shots of the banner.

KIRSTY drifts over towards her mother, JEAN NEWLOVE, blowing a plume of smoke toward the high ceiling.

KIRSTY
Seventy years. I didn't think the Old Man would make it this far without being arrested for sedition. Or at least for being the most opinionated man in Britain.

JEAN turns, her eyes softening as they land on KIRSTY.

JEAN
He’s "principled”, Kirsty. That’s what they always said. Tonight I dare say that he’s even a bit nervous.

KIRSTY
(Laughing)
Dad? Nervous? He’s faced down the British Army and the BBC Board of Governors. What’s he got to be scared of? A few thousand fans in flat caps?

JEAN
He’s the old man now, Kirsty. That’s a heavy coat to wear.

The heavy glass doors swing open. A gust of cold London air sweeps in, and with it, a phalanx of men in "Coal Not Dole" stickers, walking close together as if for warmth. At their head is ARTHUR SCARGILL, flanked by the KENT NUM REP.

The foyer goes momentarily silent as the miners march in. It’s not a guest list — it’s an army.

HAMISH MACCOLL (33) joins the siblings. He watches the miners pass with a sharp, observant eye.

HAMISH

Look at that. Dad’s managed it again. He’s turned a birthday party into a picket line.

NEILL
(Quietly)
That’s the only way he knows how to celebrate.

PEGGY looks up toward the balcony where EWAN is standing, partially obscured by the shadows, looking down at the crowd.

PEGGY
(To the children)
Right. Into your places. The revolution starts in ten minutes.

KIRSTY winks at her brothers, crushes her cigarette under a designer boot, and heads for the auditorium.

KIRSTY
(Over her shoulder)
Break a leg, Dad. I just hope that we don’t all have to sing the Internationale together.

8 INT. ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, STAGE, NIGHT, 1985 8

The vast auditorium is a packed, mostly of middle-aged and not particularly smartly-dressed people. On stage, the banner hangs highs.

ARTHUR SCARGILL stands at the centre microphone. He is perfectly composed, his suit sharp. He holds the heavy, polished brass Davy Miners' Safety Lamp aloft. It glows with a steady, defiant flame. The crowd falls into a church-like hush.

ARTHUR SCARGILL
(dignified)
Can I say on this evening it's a pleasure and a privilege to be present at this birthday celebration and present this special miners' lamp to someone like Ewan MacColl, who has made an outstanding contribution not only to folk music but to the working-class movement.

The roar that follows is huge. EWAN gets up from his seat on to the stage and walks over to collect the lamp from SCARGILL. Their hands lock over the brass casing.

EWAN steps to the microphone. He holds the lamp at chest height, his eyes fixed on the small, flickering wick behind the glass. He doesn't look

at the audience yet; he looks into the light.

EWAN
(Voice low, gravelly, resonating)
Thank you, Arthur. And thank you to the men who carried this light in the darkness.

He looks up, his gaze piercing the front rows where PEGGY and his children sit.

EWAN
Two months ago, I sat in my living room in Beckenham and watched the news. I saw the reports from Goldthorpe in Yorkshire. Two young lads... Paul and Darren Holmes... buried under an embankment while they were trying to find coal to keep their families warm through this Winter. In 1984! The striking miners nearby tried to dig them out in time. They sent for the boys' parents at once, but it was all too late.

A sombre, heavy silence descends.

EWAN
Seeing those families in the mud... it wasn't just a news report to me. It was a haunting. It took me back sixty years to when my father took me to see boys picking for coal on slag heaps. I saw my comrades, the miners on their long strike after they'd been abandoned when the General Strike collapsed, standing on the slag heaps at Pendleton Colliery in 1926. I saw the same desperate scramble. The same grey faces. The same mud.

He grips the handle of the lamp tighter, his knuckles white.

9 EXT. SLAG HEAP, PEMBLETON COLLIERY, LANCASHIRE 1926. 9

A sign reads "Pendleton Colliery". There are dozens of young children climbing the slag heaps to pick coal for their families. Their parents are looking on. One man, JOHN FOWLER (50s), has two fingers missing from his right hand. JIMMY and WILL are standing and watching, but JIMMY is not joining in the coal-picking.

JOHN FOWLER
(Lancashire English, half-shouting to the children)
Careful now! This is dangerous. If you fall,

you could get crushed under all these coals. It happens every time that there's a strike on.

JIMMY looks solemn and catches the eyes of JOHN.

JOHN FOWLER
(with a sigh)
Tha's looking at my missing fingers, isn't tha?... I lost them in an accident down the pit with some machinery that wouldn't turn off. A solicitor told me that I had a good case – but then I found out that he'd been saying the same thing to the pit-owner! The bastard was working for him all along.

JIMMY feels some tears coming and he looks down. WILL intervenes and pats him on the shoulder.

WILL
Some folk – some failures of evolution – get fooled and think that we have fairness in this country just because Mr. Fowler gets a few pennies for his troubles, but how are those pennies supposed to make up for losing two fingers, eh?

JIMMY is pensive as he stares down at the ground. He looks up at the slag heap and sighs. He grinds his teeth, then stops. He then clenches his fists as he surveys the sad scene.

10 **INT. ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, STAGE, NIGHT, 1985** **10**

As EWAN returns from his memory, he realises that the room is still silent and is expecting more words from him.

EWAN
We like to think we've moved on. We like to think we've built a world where bairns don't have to risk their lives to stay warm. But looking at Goldthorpe, I realised that, underneath all the media niceties, it is always 1926. Things have not changed. The working class are still being exploited and they are still fighting back.

He raises the lamp high above his head.

EWAN
This light is for them. For the ghosts from the past and the struggles of the present!

There is another round of applause.

EWAN
Now I think that it’s time for a song with my wife, Peggy, and my son, Callum.

CALLUM rises from his seat.

CALLUM
(muttering)
We’re like the royal family of folk.

There is some murmuring from the audience as CALLUM gets his guitar ready. EWAN bends his ear forward to sing.

EWAN MacCOLL & PEGGY SEEGER
(singing)
Well the battle it is joined at last the forces they are massed
On their side the press the telly all the weapons of their class
Plus MacGregor and his blacklegs but we'll never let 'em pass
The NUM's the weapon of the miners

Daddy what did you do in the strike?
Did you scab and let your workmates wage the fight?
How the neighbours stood and booed us
Said we had the stink of Judas?
Daddy what did you do in the strike?

There is a roaring applause.

11 INT. ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR, 1985 11

The adrenaline of the stage hasn't dissipated; it’s humming in the cramped, neon-lit hallway. DOC ROWE is hunched over his camera.

EWAN
(Relieved)
Well, Doc? Did you catch it?

DOC ROWE
I got some good ones. That was a great performance. Well done! These photos will go down in history.

Ewan nods, satisfied, and turns to find his children clustered near a "No Smoking" sign. KIRSTY is ignoring the sign, a fresh cigarette clamped between her teeth. NEILL and CALLUM stand with

their hands in their pockets, looking like they're waiting for a bus that's running late. EWAN approaches them pointedly.

EWAN
So. You stayed for the 'un-amplified' bits?

NEILL
(With a tight, diplomatic smile)
We stayed, Dad. It was... powerful. The lamp was a nice touch. Very theatrical.

EWAN
(Eyes narrowing)
Theatrical? It was a piece of the coalface, Neill. Not a prop from the theatre.

CALLUM
(Intervening)
He just means it worked, Dad. The crowd was with you. Even the ones who don't know a pit-head from a hole in the ground.

KIRSTY exhales a long, thin stream of smoke. She looks at her father with a mix of deep love and weary exhaustion.

KIRSTY
The music was done very well and it's lovely to see how many people love you. It's just… there was a lot of talking and a lot of politics. Don't you ever give it a rest? Not even for your birthday?

EWAN
(Stiffening)
Too many people are happy to forget. I don't have that luxury, Kirsty. Neither do you, if you're going to call yourself a songwriter.

KIRSTY
(A flash of heat in her eyes)
I write songs about the world now: not how it was in the days of Karl Marx. I'm making a song against Apartheid. Why not do something like that for a change?

The silence that follows is sharp. PEGGY appears at Ewan's elbow, her hand resting firmly on his arm.

PEGGY
That's enough for tonight. Everyone's tired. The cars are waiting. Neill, Callum, help Doc

with the gear. Kirsty... put that out before the fire marshal has a coronary.

EWAN looks at KIRSTY, then at his sons. For a second, he looks like he wants to say something else – but then he turns back to Doc.

EWAN
I'm looking forward to seeing the photos, Doc. I'd like to see them.

DOC
No problem… Now what's this that Peggy tells me about an interview? That's what I'd like to see.

EWAN
You'll have to get a signal from Granada. I'll be going to see Salford again after the interview.

DOC
Do you miss it?

EWAN
(emphatic)
I can't stand the place – yet I can't deny it. It made me who I am.

KIRSTY turns and finds JEAN.

JEAN
Did you enjoy it?

KIRSTY
It was like a three-hour lecture with music.

JEAN
All folk tonight too.

KIRSTY
No surprise there.

JEAN
Your dad only recognises three forms of music: folk, classical and jazz.

KIRSTY
(suppressing annoyance)
Yes.

JEAN and KIRSTY move towards the door, as EWAN and

DOC continue chatting.

12 **INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985** **12**

EWAN sits waiting in a dark studio. He looks around the room. After a few seconds, in walks DAVID BOULTON (50) with a thick file of paper. DAVID extends his hand to shake EWAN's.

DAVID BOULTON
It's nice to meet you again, Mr. MacColl. Can I call you Ewan?

EWAN
Of course. It's what I've been called for a long time now.

DAVID smiles a bit. He knows.

DAVID
I've done a lot of research on you. You've done so much: theatre, music, marriage, children, politics – how did you find time for it all?

EWAN
Well, time flies when you're having fun… I have read some of your work as well. Didn't you used to write for Tribune?

DAVID
Yes, I did. I didn't realise that you read that.

EWAN
Well, I don't – but you pick these things up.

DAVID tries to smile. EWAN is serious.

DAVID
The way that we'll do this is cut some clips of your concerts and your recent birthday party into the interview. Does that sound OK?

EWAN
That's fine.

DAVID
I see that you got a miner's lamp from Arthur Scargill. That's interesting. I'd like to start from your upbringing in Salford and go chronologically to the present day. Is that OK?

EWAN

Again, all fine.

DAVID
That’s great. I’ll go and tell the cameraman and lighting people and so on to get things going.

A FLOOR MANAGER with a headset stalks around with a roll of gaffer tape. Two CAMERA OPERATORS on pedestals glide like prehistoric birds, their lenses trained on a single armchair.

A MAKE-UP ASSISTANT approaches EWAN’s chair with a powder puff. Ewan swats her hand away without looking at her.

DAVID watches this, unblinking. He checks his dense folder of notes a last time before putting them to one side. He steps into the light, settling into his own chair. He just adjusts his lapel mic and looks Ewan in the eye.

The SOUND RECORDIST looks at his needles. DAVID leans forward. EWAN’s eyes sharpen.

The red “ON AIR” light flickers to life.

DAVID
(to camera)
Good evening. Tonight I’m joined in the Granada studio by Ewan MacColl - writer, composer, actor, playwriter, folk singer, agitator, romantic and Stalinist.

EWAN raises an eyebrow.

DAVID
(to camera)
We’re going to learn about the long career of the daddy of the folk revival in Britain just after he celebrated his 70th birthday in London.

DAVID turns to EWAN.

DAVID
(to EWAN)
You spoke at the Festival Hall about your father. About how he took you to the slag heaps at Pembleton Colliery during the great strike of 1926. It sounds as if your father

was your introduction both to singing and to politics – two great passions of your life.

EWAN nods, his face caught in the dramatic shadows of the side-lighting.

EWAN
He was the library I grew up in. Every song, every strike, every bit of resistance – it all came from my father.

DAVID pauses.

DAVID
Did he see your success? I believe that you were still mostly working in radio at the time that he died.

Ewan takes a slow, deliberate sip of water. His hand is steady, but his eyes are distant.

EWAN
He didn't see “success” the way a Granada producer sees it. To him, success was staying upright when the world wanted you on your knees. But toward the end... the last years were a long, dark tunnel. He was coughing up the foundry every night.

DAVID
You describe this in one of your songs. “In the stinking heat of the iron foundry, my old man was made.”

EWAN’s jaw tightens as he leans in.

EWAN
(low, intense vibrato)
He would always be preaching the revolution… Other folk would shake their heads, sigh and say, (imitating Scots) “Aye… he’s oan one” or “He’s his ain worst enemy”. Whenever there was any dispute at the foundry, he’d be to the fore of the struggle. A few weeks later, he’d be handed his cards. He’d gone from town to town, even briefly to Australia, to escape the blacklists, but eventually the blacklists caught up with him.

EWAN is staring at DAVID.

13 **INT. PEEL PARK LIBRARY, READING ROOM, 1930** **13**

JIMMY walks in and surveys the long leather-topped tables with titles such as *Textile Mercury, London Illustrated News* and *Architectural Review*. There are a few old men asleep on the chairs.

LIBRARY ATTENDANT
Come along now! This isn't a doss-house.

An old man blinks his eyes, coughs and turns a few pages of the journal that he was pretending to read. JIMMY walks over and sees WILL talking to JOCK MUIRHEAD quietly. JIMMY senses some unease and stays out of sight to listen.

WILL
(quietly)
I was supposed to hae a job in the foundry at Metropolitan-Vickers, where moulders were being hired for a big casting destined for the Soviet Union. When I turned up, I got told that there'd been a mistak' and there's nae work for me.

JOCK
(Scots, quietly)
Does that mean that ye've been blacklisted?

WILL
(quietly)
Aye… Maggy came to see Betsy yesterday and said that her husband – Tammy, who's a foreman at the pipe-moulding foundry – said as much. What more proof do I need?

JIMMY is shocked. He quickly moves away before he is seen.

14 **EXT. PEEL PARK, SALFORD, 1930** **14**

JIMMY leaves the library and begins to walk home. He notices his father in front of him. WILL is sauntering slowly. JIMMY does not alert WILL to his presence, but stays behind him. JIMMY looks concerned as he sees how slowly his father is walking. After a few moments, JIMMY turns around and walks in the opposite direction.

15 **INT. MILLER KITCHEN, 1930** **15**

JIMMY enters the room quickly, sniffing the air. He can smell gas. He checks the gas ring, but nothing is out of place. He quickly runs out to the front room.

16 **INT. MILLER FRONT ROOM, 1930** **16**

JIMMY tries to open the door, but there are several coats and newspapers in front of it; he had to push with all his weight to get it open. The blind is drawn. As JIMMY picks up the coats, he notices a length of rubber tubing that has been used to connect the heap to the gas-fitting. JIMMY sees that the gas-mantle has been carefully removed and put on the mantelpiece, and then he sees WILL lying down on the floor. Realising what is going on, JIMMY frantically begins to tear the rubber tubing away before thinking to turn off the gas tap.

JIMMY
(shouting)
You can’t die!.. You can’t die! For Jesus’s sake, don’t die! Please, please don’t die! You can’t! You can’t!

JIMMY raises the blind and leaves the front door.

17 EXT. HOUSE NEXT DOOR, 1930 **17**

JIMMY bangs frantically on the house next door, which belongs to ARTHUR CALDWELL.

JIMMY
(not realising he’s speaking)
Don’t die! Don’t die!

JIMMY bangs again.

JIMMY
Damn! He’s been on night shifts. He’ll be asleep.

JIMMY opens the door, which is unlocked.

JIMMY
(bellowing)
Arthur! Arthur! Come quick! It’s my father.

ARTHUR appears immediately, buttoning up his trousers as he follows JIMMY out of his house.

18 INT. MILLER FRONT ROOM, 1930 **18**

JIMMY and ARTHUR CALDWELL come in quickly. WILL is still lying there. ARTHUR CALDWELL kneels down to inspect him.

ARTHUR CALDWELL
(quickly)
He’s still breathing. Let’s get him out into the open!

JIMMY and ARTHUR CALDWELL struggle to drag WILL

outside.

19 **EXT. MILLER BACK GARDEN, 1930** **19**

JIMMY and ARTHUR CALDWELL pull WILL outside and breathe a sigh of relief. ARTHUR CALDWELL then begins to knead his chest and addresses WILL.

ARTHUR CALDWELL
(out of breath)
They’re buggers, aren’t they? They don’t give a bloody sod about us. Don’t let them get you down, Will! You’ve always told us to fight on. Don’t you give in to them after all that! … Come on, me old cock. A cup of char’s what you need.

ARTHUR CALDWELL goes inside the house to the kitchen. WILL sits up on the kitchen doorstep, his hands hanging limply between his knees and tears running down his face. JIMMY stands in the back garden helpless.

20 **INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985** **20**

DAVID shifts in his chair, leaning forward.

DAVID
If you wanted to make your father, you’d found a way of doing it by the time that you were seventeen. A leader in the Young Communist League and a keen rambler in your spare time.

EWAN
I loved the hills. I got to know so many new people from those walks on a weekend up at Thorpe Cloud and to the Old Woman’s cottage. I remember sleeping on a bed with three girls next to me.

DAVID inhales a moment and then continues.

DAVID
And you decided that the hills of Derbyshire didn't belong to the Dukes, but to the working people.

EWAN’s eyes spark.

EWAN
They called it “trespass”. I called it reclaiming the stolen goods to the people who deserved it. You have to understand, David, that Salford in the thirties was a grey box. Smoke, brick and the sound of the knocker-up.

The hills were the only place you could breathe without tasting sulphur.

DAVID
But you didn't just go for a walk. You organised a confrontation. The Mass Trespass at Kinder Scout. I've seen some reports that you wrote a song for it.

DAVID looks at his notes and tilts his head slightly.

DAVID
You've always seemed very sure in your convictions. Were you even sure at that age?

EWAN
I was taught that the workers had an Earth to inherit. Well, the hills are the Earth. They were ours.

DAVID
Did you plan to confront the gamekeepers and owners that day, or did it just happen?

EWAN
(A sharp, dry laugh)
We knew exactly what was going to happen, as the gamekeepers had come out for us so many times before. They were always shouting at us and even having a swipe at us sometimes, if there weren't that many of us to fight back. Yes, it was a revolution in hiking boots! We were asserting a fundamental right. That the land is a common treasury for all.

He leans in, his voice gaining that rhythmic, oratorical march.

EWAN
I remember standing at the bottom of William's Clough. Hundreds of us. Working lads from Manchester and Salford. We didn't have the fancy gear they have now. We had hobnail boots and old army surplus jackets. And we had a song that told the gamekeeper exactly where he could stick his "Private Property" signs.

DAVID
When was this exactly?

EWAN

Well, I can remember going on the walk with Joan Littlewood, who I'm sure you know… I must have been about 17 or so. That would make it, what, 1932.

21 **EXT. KINDER SCOUT, DERBYSHIRE. 1932** **21**

EWAN is still JIMMY but now aged 17. He walks alongside JOAN LITTLEWOOD (18), a woman with curly black hair who does not smile much. There is a large group of ramblers, often with dirty coats. Leading the way is BENNY ROTHMAN (21), a slim and cheerful man with curly black hair.

JOAN
(posh accent)
I always thought that you had nice legs.

JIMMY
All the better to go rambling with, my dear.

JOAN
(quietly)
I feel as if the way that I speak stands out a bit in this group.

JIMMY
My father once told me not to trust those who speak like they do on the BBC.

JOAN
What's so bad about the BBC?

JIMMY
Well, they might do some good dramas, but they ultimately serve the ruling class.

JOAN
I think… that really you'd love to work there.

JIMMY
I'm sure they wouldn't have a lad like me.

JIMMY and JOAN look upwards as they hear a call to pay attention.

BENNY ROTHMAN
(Manchester English)
I can see a gamekeeper in the distance. There's no doubt that he'll tell us that we're trespassing and tell us to go back to our ratholes. The reason we're here is to stand up to him. Nobody should turn back and no one should listen to what that beast says.

We're doing this together. The gamekeepers can't get us all out.

There are murmurs of agreements. The group carries on with determination.

JIMMY
(singing to himself)
I'm a rambler, I'm a rambler
From Manchester way

JOAN
Salford, isn't it?

JIMMY
Derbyshire folk don't know where Salford is.

JOAN
(perplexed)
Oh! I need to become one of these hard northerners.

JIMMY
(carrying on his song)
I get on my pleasure the hard moorland way
I may be a wage-slave on Monday
But I am a free man on Sunday

JOAN
That's not bad. Did you just come up with that now?

JIMMY
Aye, but I've been writing songs all my life.

As the group marches on, they look up to see the GAMEKEEPER (30s).

GAMEKEEPER
(Derbyshire accent)
Hey! You!

BENNY
Hey! What?

GAMEKEEPER
(shouting)
Get off this land! Who do you think you are coming on someone else's land? Do you just take over someone else's house?

BENNY
We're going to drown out these bastards. Let's get singing your song, Jimmy.

JIMMY looks nervous, but he turns to the crowd and uses his hands to indicate singing.

JIMMY
(singing)
I’m a rambler, I’m a rambler from Manchester Way
I get all my pleasure the hard moorland way
I may be a wage-slave on Monday
But I am a free man on Sunday

A few more GAMEKEEPERS come over now, having heard the noise.

GAMEKEEPER
All this land is my master’s.

BENNY
Where is your master? Let him come and speak to us!

GAMEKEEPER
You’ll all end up in court over this.

BENNY
We’re not moving. We have a right to fresh air. We have a right to exercise.

JIMMY
(singing)
The day was just ending and I was descending
Down Grinesbrook just by Upper Tor
When a voice cried "Hey you" in the way keepers do
He'd the worst face that ever I saw

GAMEKEEPER
Think of the grouse!

BENNY
The grouse? Really?

EWAN
(singing)
He called me a louse and said, “Think of the grouse”

Members of the group laugh at this new line. They carry on walking.

22 EXT. EDALE RAILWAY STATION 22

The group are quiet and tired in the station.

BENNY
It doesn’t look as if this train is going to turn up, does it?

JOAN
When’s the next one?

BENNY
About two hours off – if that ever turns up.

JOAN
Oh!

A number of the group look irritated by this. JIMMY tries to maintain his cheerfulness.

JIMMY
That just gives me more time to finish my song. Let’s do another verse.

The group smile.

JIMMY
(singing)
He called me a louse and said "Think of the grouse"
Well I thought, but I still couldn't see
Why all Kinder Scout and the moors roundabout
Couldn't take both the poor grouse and me
He said "All this land is my master's"
At that I stood shaking my head
No man has the right to own mountains
Any more than the deep ocean bed

23 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 23

EWAN sips a glass of water.

DAVID
I’m conscious that we’ve spoken about your father quite a bit, but not much about your mother. Can you tell me a bit about her?

EWAN
She was a charlady. Although my father was in and out of work, she was able to keep her head down and keep her job. She would take in clothes and our house was always full of the smell of hot linen. When I came home from

school, she'd have been ironing monotonously, backwards and forwards, for hours. She'd also be singing songs like "A Wee Drappie O't".

DAVID
I see that you did one of your first albums singing with her.

EWAN
Yes, she had a great repertoire of Scots songs. We used to revere Robert Burns, the Bard, in our house. He was the only man who could compete with Lenin for my parents' attention.

DAVID
And did she share your father's politics?

EWAN
Yes, but she also knew when to hold her noise. She only ever said that her childhood had been "sheer, bloody Hell". I never knew how she managed to clean for these people who looked down on her. They would refer to her as part of the "work-shy" while she was doing all their work for them… Her father, so my grandfather, was quite conservative. He thought that the son shone out of Lord Buchan's out. There was the odd thing, now and then, where that came out in my mother and she was a bit more conservative than my father was.

DAVID
In what way exactly?

EWAN
(sighing)
My father would always let out his opinion on anything and everything. My mother would keep quiet and let it eat her inside. It wore her down over the years.

24 EXT. MILLERS' STREET, SALFORD 1934 24

It is 4:30am in the morning. INNES, the knocker-up, is carrying a long, flexible bamboo pipe. He uses it to rattle the bedroom windows of the names on his list.

INNES
(Lancashire English)
Get up, you lazy sod! Lying there stinking in your bed!... Get up, you lazy bugger!

INNES then goes on to the next house to begin again.

INNES
Get up, you lazy sod! Lying there stinking….

WILL has opened a window and interrupted INNES.

WILL
Shut up, you bad-tempered auld swine! Bugger off! Why the Hell don’t you go and droon yoursell’, you half-witted auld bugger!

WILL closes the window with a thud. INNES carries on with his bamboo stick but does not shout now.

The door of the Miller household opens. BETSY goes outside, dressed for her job as a charwoman. She closes the door behind her and walks off quickly to her work as a charwoman.

25 INT. MILLER FRONT ROOM, 1934 **25**

BETSY is back home after a long day. WILL is reading the Communist Manifesto. BETSY is very tired. JOAN and JIMMY are sitting quietly.

BETSY
(Perthshire Scots)
We’re just hangin’ on by the skin of our teeth. Could ye no’ keep your mouth shut just ‘til we get straight?

WILL
I havenae put a foot wrong.

BETSY
Then why, in the name o’ God, can ye no’ haud on tae a job?

There is silence.

BETSY
Every mornin’, I am up and away by half past four. By the time them office folks are arrivin’ at their jobs, I’ve done four hours of brute work.

WILL
(murmuring)
Aye, Bet. Aye

BETSY
(irritated)

Is that a' ye can say? Aye?...

JOAN senses BETSY's anger mounting and cowers in a corner.

BETSY
I'm thinkin' on anither job, ye ken. A debt-collector – just like Callendar who used to come knockin' for oor rent. Can ye remember when I used tae send Maggie tae deal wi' him?... That's what I'm goin' tae be noo. "A disgrace tae the country that bore ye"! That's what Aunt Maggie used tae say tae Callendar.

WILL
(in despair)
For God's sake, woman, haud your tongue and gie your mouth a rest!

WILL reaches for his cap and walks towards the door.

WILL
(thinking out loud)
I never hae enough money to staun my roond any mair.

The door slams. BETSY's expression immediately changes to one of regret. JOAN looks awkwardly at her shoes. JIMMY goes over to her mother. He gently tries to touch her, but she recoils.

JIMMY
(softly)
Mother, it's all right. We've managed before.

BETSY
(resigned)
Just leave me be, Jimmy!

JIMMY looks over to JOAN.

JOAN
We all have to take jobs that we don't want to do sometimes.

JIMMY
(unimpressed)
Not all of us.

JOAN
(patient)
I’m just trying to help. I understand that a debt collector is not great for a socialist, but needs must. What other choice do you have?

JIMMY nods. JOAN realises that this is a cue to stop.

26 **INT. MILLER HOUSEHOLD, 1934.** **26**

BETSY MILLER (48) is ironing linen by an open fire. JOAN is sitting on a chair and reading a play. JIMMY is sitting on another chair and writing a song.

BETSY
You know what they’d call Joan, don’t ye?

JOAN looks up in bewilderment. JIMMY raises his eyebrows and looks to his mother.

BETSY
Can ye gi’ me a haund wi’ somethin’ through in the kitchen please, Jimmy?

JIMMY gets up silently. JOAN looks suspicious as she is left alone.

BETSY (O.S.)
Are ye gettin’ wed or what?

JIMMY (O.S.)
She wouldn’t have it, mother. She’s a mind of her own.

BETSY (O.S.)
Your father would love to be a grandda. He says how he misses haudin’ his ain child.

JOAN looks sullen. As soon as JIMMY comes back in the room, BETSY speaks quickly.

JOAN
(quickly)
Shall we go out for our rehearsal? We don’t want to be late after you told them off for being late last time, do we?

JIMMY
(resigned)
Aye, I suppose so.

JOAN stands up and leaves the room with JIMMY.

27 **EXT. SALFORD ROAD, 1934** **27**

JIMMY and JOAN are walking slowly to the tram stop. Their body language is distant.

JOAN
I’m wondering if our comrades are going to suggest expelling us at this rate, with all the arguments about what we’re doing and where we’re performing and turning up on time.

JIMMY
Don’t worry! We’re off to Moscow soon anyway.

JOAN
(surprised)
What? Why do you say that?

JIMMY
I wrote to the Moscow Academy of Cinema and Theatre. They’ll stand by their comrades.

JOAN
(bemused)
Will they pay our fare?

They approach the tram stop and stand still to wait.

JIMMY
(paused)
Well… there’s not just that… we still need money for the licence.

JOAN
Which licence?

JIMMY
Our marriage lines.

JOAN
To Hell with that! I’ve told you I don’t believe in it. The French Communists don’t either.

JIMMY
(defiant)
They get married.

JOAN
Well, if they do, the women keep their single name.

JIMMY
It would bring the Party into disrepute if we were arrested and the police discovered that we weren't married.

JOAN
Oh to Hell with the Party! Stuffy lot from what I see of them! And to Hell with the police!

The two let a silence carry for a few moments as they approach.

28 INT. TRAM CARRIAGE TO RUSHOLME, 1934 **28**

JIMMY and JOAN are standing up on a crowded tram carriage. They are facing one another and they are not smiling.

JIMMY
Look! You're 21 now. You don't need to ask for your parents' consent.

JOAN
Consent for what?

JIMMY
(as if it's obvious)
Marriage.

JOAN becomes enraged at this and makes an attempt to hit JIMMY. JIMMY does not fight back, but he does try to move out of the way and collides with other passengers.

The tram braked suddenly and comes to a halt. JOAN stops hitting JIMMY and tries to regain her composure. The TRAM DRIVER is behind several other passengers.

TRAM DRIVER
(shouting down the tram)
What the bloody Hell is going on?

The TRAM DRIVER gets up and walks down the tram.

PASSENGER
(calm voice)
He only wants her to marry him.

TRAM DRIVER

(contemptuous)
Well, it looks like a fine start to it.

The TRAM DRIVER sighs and shakes his head before returning to his driving seat. The passengers are now looking away awkwardly.

JOAN
I don't wear rings and I'm not changing my surname after I've worked so hard to get it established. You're just going to have to tell that to your mother… I feel sorry for your mother, having to work in a job that she hates and look after your father as he goes from bad to worse… I'll think about it anyway.

JIMMY nods silently and averts his gaze.

JIMMY
(singing quietly to himself)
She walks in the cold, dark hour before the morning
The hour when wounded night begins to bleed
Stands at the back of the patient few
In the silent almost sleeping queue
Seeing no one and not being seen

JOAN
Is this a song about your mother? I hope to goodness it's not about me.

JIMMY forces a smile.

JIMMY
(singing quietly again)
Working shoes are wrapping in working apron
Rolled in an oilcloth bag across her knees
The swaying tram assaults the morning
Steely blue-grey day is dawning
Draining the last few dregs of sleep away

JOAN feels calmer.

JOAN
You're a bugger sometimes, Jimmy Miller, but you can write a good song. That was really quite beautiful. Best I've heard from you in a long time.

JIMMY smiles. The two embrace.

29 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 29

Ewan sits back, arms crossed.

DAVID
Ewan, you've been involved with the Communist Party for a long time. You're well-known in Vietnam for "The Ballad of Ho-Chi Minh".

EWAN
(interrupting)
One of my best songs.

DAVID
(enunciating clearly)
Going back to 1951, I can see that you released a song called "The Ballad of *Stalin*".

DAIVD pauses, letting the name hang in the air.

DAVID
Given everything we've known since – the purges, the gulags – how do you look back on that song?

Ewan doesn't flinch. He leans forward, his voice dropping into a register of pragmatic, historical materialism. He taps his temple, as if recalling the rhythm of the verse.

EWAN
I have no regrets.

DAVID
Your brother-in-law has been nicknamed "Stalin's songbird", but really he was never as keen on Stalin as you were. Has anyone ever held that records against you?

EWAN
When I wrote that song, the Soviet Union was the only thing that had broken the back of the Nazi beast. Stalin was the man behind all that. Russia has been slaughtered in the First World War. Stalin got the country industrialised and modernised, and led them to defeat Nazi Germany.

DAVID
But the cost, Ewan? The human cost?

EWAN
(sharply)

The song was a good song. I often meet people who mention that old record of mine, although I’m not sure if I have a copy myself. It dealt with the positive things Stalin did. Stalin did a lot of good things: the industrialisation, the literacy, the victory over fascism.

DAVID looks blankly. EWAN shrugs.

EWAN
You don't judge a map by the potholes in the road. You judge it by whether it gets you to the destination. At that time, for the international working class, he was the destination.

DAVID watches him, fascinated by the refusal to bend.

DAVID
Have you ever heard of the Kobzars in the Ukraine?

EWAN
(perplexed)
No… I don’t think that I’ve ever heard of them.

DAVID
(sombre)
They were blind musicians, who played traditional Ukrainian folk music. They were guided from town to town by bandurists. They earned a living by playing music, much like how the Travellers from your radio ballads did work as knackers and tinkers as they travelled around.

EWAN
(interested)
I didn’t know that. Interesting.

DAVID
(steely)
Maybe you didn’t know that Stalin invited them all to a a congress outside Kiev and then his soldiers had them all shot once they were assembled.

EWAN
(defiant)
I’ve certainly never heard of that.

DAVID
(sarcastic)
Was it not in the Morning Star?

EWAN
(ruffled)
Maybe not, David. The revolution did not solve all problems overnight. I cannot say that I've ever heard of that one and I wonder if the source that you've read for that is reliable or not. It may be imperialist propaganda… But I wish that we, in this country, remembered the sacrifice that the Red Army made for Europe. You might know that badly-translated song that asks, "Do you think that the Russians want war?" It asks some good questions though. 20 million killed by Nazi invasion. 20 million. We owe them for that sacrifice. Could we have done it without them?... What were we fighting for?... What interest did a working-class man have in the British Army?

EWAN stares down.

EWAN
(deliberately calm)
I don't deny that crimes were committed in the Soviet Union; there's no doubt about it. But it pales in comparison to the crimes of capitalism, which is the exploitation of workers, year after year. And what of the imperialist wars that have killed millions?

DAVID
(measured)
Ewan, you know that I'm on the same side as you when it comes to militarism. We've probably been on some of the same CND marches. However, I'm opposed to Soviet militarism as well as British militarism. I oppose the USSR going into Afghanistan as well as America going into Vietnam.

EWAN
(defiant)
They're not the same: the USSR is in Afghanistan to support the people's government there. Our military has conquered other countries just to find a cheap source of labour, as if they don't have enough already.

DAVID

(defensive)
You don’t need to tell me what’s wrong with the British military. I’ve read about the Quakers imprisoned during World War I and all the square-bashing that they were subjected to at Wakefield and Broadmoor.

EWAN
(pondering)
Square-bashing? I’ve not heard that term in a while… There was a programme that I saw on the BBC once contrasting the attitudes of the Quakers and the Communists during WWI. You should find a copy with one of your friends at the BBC Archive.

DAVID raises an eyebrow, but decides to move on.

30 INT. CATTERICK MILITARY GARRISON. 1940. 30

JIMMY (35), now with a ginger beard, is opening a letter inside. The envelope reads, “James Miller, Catterick Garrison, Wathgill, Richmond, Yorkshire N.R.” He pulls out a short letter carefully and is pleased to see the handwriting of JOAN.

JOAN (V.O.)
Dear Jimmy,
I’m so sorry that military life is so banal to you. I can imagine that the regimented hours are quite a shock after so many years of creativity. I’m glad that you’re still writing songs. I might have to perform “Browned Off” myself one day. Wathgill is not too far away. I’ll catch the train up to see you this weekend and do my best to help you.
Love,
Joan.

JIMMY sighs and looks up at another SOLDIER.

SOLDIER
She writes to you nigh on every day. Have you told her your new lyrics?

JIMMY thinks for a second on how to respond.

JIMMY
(singing)
The medical inspection boys is just a bleedin’ farce
He gropes around your penis and he noses up your arse
For even a Private’s privates boys enjoy no privacy

You sacrifice all that to save democracy

Oh! I was browned off, browned off…

There is a banging at the door.

MEDICAL OFFICER
Ey! Write another song about me, Miller, and I'll give you an injection in a place you'll never forget.

JIMMY waits for the MEDICAL OFFICER to move on.

JIMMY
(to SOLDIER)
What do you need to do to get transferred to a regiment that does something useful?

SOLDIER
I don't know. It all seems to be square-bashing here.

JIMMY
(incredulous)
What a term! It reminds me of the teacher who made an example of me for joking that a "right angle" was a "left angle"… I imagine that he's probably fighting in Mussolini's army by now.

The SOLDIER gives a knowing look. JIMMY picks up a pen and a fresh sheet of paper. He writes a letter back to JOAN.

JIMMY (V.O.)
Dear Joan,
Instead of coming all the way to Wathgill, please meet me at Manchester Central Station on Saturday. I'll wait by the ticket office for you.
Jimmy

JIMMY writes the address on the envelope: "Joan Littlewood, Coburg Street, Salford, Lancashire." He seals it carefully and ponders.

31 INT. MANCHESTER CENTRAL STATION, 1940 31

JOAN looks hopeful as she enters the station briskly. She glances at her watch and then looks to the ticket office. JIMMY is standing there in shorts and a Bergen pack. She rushes over to him. JIMMY spots her and gets ready to speak

immediately.

JIMMY EWAN
(before JOAN can stop walking)
Call me Ewan.

JOAN
(puzzled)
What for?

EWAN
It’s my pen name: Ewan MacColl. From Lewis Grassic Gibbon.

JOAN
And MacColl?

EWAN
Plucked in from the air.

JOAN
(bemused)
Why the Hell have you done this?

EWAN
Jimmy Miller is wanted by the North Riding Constabulary for desertion. Ewan MacColl is in Manchester and far away from Jimmy Miller.

JOAN
Did anyone see you leave?

EWAN
I don’t think so. Nobody knew I was there.

JOAN looks sullen. The two walk out of the station in silence.

32 **INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985** **32**

DAVID picks up a vinyl record sleeve. This is not one of EWAN’s austere Blackthorne releases, but a glossy commercial pressing.

DAVID
I’d like to talk now about one of your less political songs. "Dirty Old Town." To the world, it’s a romantic, nostalgic postcard of an industrial city, but you didn’t write it for a pop chart. You wrote it for a play in 1949 about environmental decay in Salford.

EWAN leans back.

EWAN
It was a bridge, David. A scene-change in “Landscape with Chimneys”. I needed something to cover the sound of the stagehands moving a brick wall. It wasn't meant to be a “hit”. It was functional. It was supposed to smell of the Gasworks and the canal.

DAVID
(Leaning in)
But they’ve taken the “smell” out of it, haven't they? They’ve made it pretty. It’s now a drunken sing-along in every Irish pub from Boston to Becontree. Does it bother you?

EWAN’s eyes go sharp.

EWAN
They can sing it in a tuxedo or they can sing it in a gutter, David. They can’t change the geography. This was the same city that Engels walked in. When I was young, we used to say that this was the gasworks that old Friedrich spoke about. It was our city. When I met Peggy, I made her go to Salford within a few weeks.

DAVID
Some lines were a bit… racey for 1949.

EWAN
Maybe it was ahead of its time. We all knew that these things went on, even if we kept quiet about them. They didn’t just happen in Salford either. I did a whole tour of the north of England. Even in sleepy places like Kendal or Ormesby, I saw the same girls springing on to the streets at night as I described at that song in Salford.

EWAN looks to one side and smiles.

33 INT. ORMESBY HALL, NORTH YORKSHIRE, 1947 33

The room is filled with cigarette smoke. There is a pianist, a saxophonist and a drummer at the front. The various members of Theatre Workshop are dancing. EWAN is not dancing, but rather walks around the room.

After the tune has finished, a YOUNG MAN stands on a chair and brings the room to attention.

YOUNG MAN
(singing)
The tightest man I know was an Irish Eskimo
Selling pork in Palestine, beneath a blazing sun
Trying to straighten out bananas
That’s a thing he’s never done

The crowd applauds vigorously. They then start grunting as they move chairs and tables back into place, and begin to tidy up.

EWAN
(puffing)
Deary me! There’s so much smoke in here.

Ewan carries on moving slowly towards JEAN NEWLOVE (24), a small woman with pale skin and ginger hair. She turns and faces him.

JEAN NEWLOVE
(Lincolnshire English)
You were excellent this evening.

EWAN
Thank you. We do our best.

JEAN
When we set off to this tour with Theatre Workshop, it was all about opening minds of the folk in these small towns to the struggles of the wider world. Now I’ve seen so many different places that it’s my mind that’s been opened.

EWAN
(cheeky)
I can open it some more minds.

JEAN
(tired)
Well, it’s getting late. I must be on my way.

EWAN
Do you have to go in yet?

JEAN
It’s late.

EWAN
Stay just a short time – a few minutes.

JEAN

I can’t. Really.

EWAN
Please.

JEAN
(with a short sigh)
Five minutes then.

EWAN
Where can we go?

JEAN takes EWAN by the hand and leads him out of the building. The others look on. Some smirk, whereas others shake their heads.

34 **EXT. GINNEL BEHIND ORMESBY HALL, 1947** **34**

EWAN and JEAN enter a tunnel of darkness. She stands with her back against the brick wall and unbuttons her coat. EWAN throws his arms around her and begins kissing all over her mouth.

JEAN’s lipstick gets on to his face. They pause on one kiss and hover with their lips glued together.

EWAN begins to caress her softly. He slides his other hand to her side and then to her back, searching for the opening of her dress.

After EWAN fiddles for a while, JEAN eventually unfastens the dress herself.

EWAN’s hand travels down her legs. In a flash, JEAN’s hand grips his wrist and holds it firmly in place.

EWAN
(pleading)
Please.

JEAN
(pulling free of him)
Don’t!... That’s enough!

JEAN begins to fasten her dress again.

JEAN
(feigning dismay)
Just look at my dress! I bet my hair’s a mess.

EWAN pauses and doesn’t speak whilst she fastens herself up again.

EWAN
Well, see you tomorrow then.

JEAN
Good night, Ewan… or Jimmy.

EWAN
(in hushed tone)
Ewan please. Especially around here!

EWAN walks out of the ginnel first. JEAN waits a moment before following him out. As EWAN passes the door to the theatre, WALTER comes out. WALTER is a scruffy young man and has clearly had a few beers.

WALTER
(Lancashire English, interrupting)
Aren’t you still married to Joan?

EWAN
(embarrassed)
Well, what can I say?

WALTER
Joan and Jean. That’s not going to be easy for you to tell apart. Then you’ll have to tell them apart from that woman who I know you slept with at Kendal. And the rest.

EWAN
(annoyed)
Is this really any of your business?

WALTER
(low and threatening)
Let’s just say that I don’t like liars, *Jimmy*.

WALTER goes inside before EWAN can answer. EWAN pauses for a minute before laughing it off and walking through the night.

EWAN
(singing)
Springs a girl from the streets at night
Dirty old town!
Dirty old town!

35 INT. ORMESBY HALL, 1947 **35**

JOAN is rehearsing a scene with MACE (19) and ROSALIE (21).

JOAN

(dramatic)
This is the sort of behaviour that will see the great city of Athens destroyed.

COLONEL PENNYMAN (V.O.)
We're looking for a Ewan MacColl, also known as James or Jimmy Miller.

There is immediate silence as the Theatre Workshop listens to the footsteps of COLONEL PENNYMAN (50s) coming up the stairs and into the room. He is in the uniform of the military police.

COLONEL PENNYMAN
I'm so sorry to disturb you. I was wondering if I can have a word with your resident playwright, as it were.

JOAN
I don't know where he's gone.

COLONEL PENNYMAN
Aren't you his wife?

JOAN is startled.

ROSALIE
He'll be working in his room.

COLONEL PENNYMAN continues to stare at JOAN.

ROSALIE
Maybe he's taken Jean for a walk.

COLONEL PENNYMAN
So that's it.

COLONEL PENNYMAN turns to leave. There are two other younger soldiers at the top of the stairs, waiting for him in silence. They follow him out of the Hall.

JOAN
(flustered)
Should I run to the village and tell him?

MACE
Why do they want him?

JOAN pauses for a minute.

JOAN
I'm not sure but… we're not far from his barracks in WWII. He deserted the army.

MACE
Really?

ROSALIE
I didn’t know that.

JOAN
Even I don’t know what really happened.

MACE
I can’t see how you’ll get there in time when the police have already left.

JOAN
(pointedly)
How do they know though?

MACE and ROSALIE shrug.

36 **INT. ORMESBY GUESTHOUSE, 1947** **36**

JEAN is sitting by the fire, looking extremely worried. JOAN is more composed.

JEAN
I saw him be taken away by police car. They’re taking him to Middlesbrough.

JOAN
Now that I think about, doing a play about desertion close to where he was deserted wasn’t a brilliant idea.

JEAN
He never told me that he deserted.

JOAN
I would get used to a few secrets. Do you, erm… know that I’m still his wife?

JEAN
(shocked)
No!

JOAN nods and pulls a glum smile.

JEAN
But I had no idea. I’m so sorry.

JOAN
It’s all right. We still work together, but we live separate lives and see separate people now.

JEAN
Why did you do that?

JOAN
Well, I never wanted to get married in the first place, and I’m not sure if he did either.

JEAN
And why did he desert the army? Was it his politics?

JOAN
I don’t think so.

JEAN
What was it then? Was he just scared of fighting? And how did he get away for so long?

There is a noise of a car pulling up. JOAN gets up and moves towards the door.

EWAN walks in, clean-shaven for the first time in a while.

JOAN walks outside.

COLONEL PENNYMAN (V.O.)
Yes, I see, but some of these artistic chaps simply can’t stand army life.

JEAN gestures to EWAN for a response.

JEAN
Well? What happened?

EWAN
(acting calm)
Oh! All a case of mistaken identity. They were looking for another James Miller, who was a much older man. They got me confused with him.

JEAN
James Miller is your real name then.

EWAN
Yes. It’s still my name, but I’d like to change it legally to Ewan MacColl.

JEAN

Why all these secrets?

EWAN
(weary)
I'm an actor, a playwright and a revolutionary. My name doesn't matter.

JOAN walks back into the room and stares at EWAN. JOAN then smiles at JEAN.

37 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 37

EWAN sighs and looks to the right.

DAVID
So you've been to Salford, Kendal, Ormesby. Why did you move to London?

EWAN
We had a big debate about it at the time. After all the touring of the north, some wanted to see what London had to offer as well. I moved to Stratford in London with Theatre Workshop in, oh, '52 or '53. And there were all sorts of people to meet there!

DAVID
(firm)
Why did you move to London?

EWAN pauses as if this is a hard question.

EWAN
Well, Jean and I moved Theatre Workshop to Stratford. Not everyone agreed. Some felt that we'd end up pandering to the bourgeoisie in London, but I don't think that we did that.

DAVID hums.

DAVID
(rhetorical question)
Why does the rest of the country want to move to London, and all the Londoners want to move to the countryside?

DAVID pauses.

DAVID
Maybe it's because Marx moved here. Didn't you want to move to Clerkenwell and read in the British Library?

EWAN
I had this idea that all southerners were middle-class or at least more middle-class than northerners, much like what Salford folk used to think about Manchester folk. But I'm glad that I moved. I've met a lot of fascinating people in London.

DAVID
I don't think that what Marx called "the idiocy of village life" would have suited you.

EWAN
Salford is a city – not a village.

DAVID
And you're not from Auchterarder?

EWAN
No, that's where my mother was from.

DAVID looks down at his notes. It reads on one page, "Sleeve of 'The English and Scottish Popular Ballads' wrote 'Ewan MacColl was born in Auchterarder, Perthshire, Scotland.' This album was recorded with A.L. Lloyd, usually known as 'Bert' for some reason."

38 **EXT. THEATRE ROYAL, STRATFORD, LONDON. 1954.** **38**

It is a hot Summer's evening. EWAN (39) waits outside the Theatre. He looks down at the letter and reads it again.

BERT LLOYD (V.O.)
(Cockney English)
It's only amongst the British that two men as similar as us could not have met by now. This is part of the self-defeating cult of each man being his own island. I'm going to do what you're not supposed to do in this country: I'm going to suggest that we meet.

EWAN smiles. When he looks up, he thinks that he recognises a man with a round face, who is wearing a well-worn tweed jacket and corduroy trousers. This turns out to be BERT (46).

EWAN
(cautious)
Excuse me! Are you Bert Lloyd?

BERT
Yes, pleased to meet you. I wasn't sure what

you looked like.

EWAN
That’s the problem with radio, I suppose.

BERT
It’s great to meet you. You’ve made quite an impression with your plays. Even George Bernard Shaw admired them.

EWAN
Thank you.

BERT
So you’ve just moved here. I enjoyed “Landscape with Chimneys” very much. Are you going to record any of those songs on a record?

EWAN
I don’t know. I’ve been busy working with Dominic Behan on children’s songs. Do you think that any of them would make it?

BERT
There was one that I liked.

BERT prepares himself to sing.

BERT
(singing)
I met my love by the gasworks croft
Dreamed a dream by the old canal
I kissed my girl by the factory wall
Dirty old town!
Dirty old town!

EWAN
You’ve remembered one of my songs.

BERT
Of course. It was excellent. So that was about Salford, but I’ve heard some of your Scots material. You sound very much English now. How did you come to be fluent in the Queen’s English and in Braid Scots?

EWAN
My parents were both from Scotland. I’ve thought about doing a record with my mother. My father died a few years back.

BERT
Oh! I’m sorry to hear that. Was he a singer

too?

EWAN
Oh! He would sing everywhere. I used to wince on the tram in embarrassment that we couldn't go anywhere without him getting the whole tram to sing along.

BERT smiles and enjoys this reminiscing.

EWAN
They moved to Derbyshire after they'd both stopped working. The last time that I saw him, I sang him this song. It felt very strange to sing when I knew that it could be the last time that I'd ever see him.

EWAN
(singing)
Ye banks and braes and streams around the castle o' Montgomery
Fair are your woods and fair your flowers, your waters never drumlie
Their summer first unfaulds her robes and there it langer tarries
'Twas there I took my last fareweel o' my sweet Highland Mary
…

They are interrupted by a policeman.

POLICEMAN
(Cockney English)
It's a bit late for singing, don't you think? I'd be heading off home now if I were you.

EWAN and BERT nod.

BERT
(surprised)
Is it against the law to sing?

POLICEMAN
Well, it might be. I could say that it's an offence under the old Public Order Act. Yes, that old chestnut.

EWAN
(annoyed)
We'll be on our way.

POLICEMAN
Very well, Mr. MacColl. I shall bid you good evening.

EWAN looks at the POLICEMAN surprised. He and BERT walk away

EWAN
Do you ever get the feeling that the police always know everything about you?

BERT
Funny you should say that, yes. Sometimes they seem to know what I've written in letters to friends.

EWAN
They always seemed to hover around my house in Salford. We'll see if they start doing it in London as well.

BERT
I think that I might know why.

EWAN
There are plenty of other places for us to go though. Tell me about your work at the BBC and your international focus.

BERT
Well, how long have you got?

BERT and EWAN smile at one another.

39 **MONTAGE 1953-4** **39**

INT. A.L. LLOYD'S OFFICE - DAY: BERT LLOYD is buried under a mountain of vinyl records and handwritten letters from every corner of the globe. He is hunched over a typewriter, one hand holding a cigarette, the other reaching for a telephone that rings incessantly.

INT. NUR HALL - NIGHT: A smoke-filled meeting of the National Union of Railwaymen. EWAN stands at the front, his ear bent forward in his signature style, leading a room of weary rail workers in a defiant chorus.

EXT. EDINBURGH STREETS - NIGHT: HAMISH HENDERSON stands at the of a boisterous People's Festival Ceilidh. The air is thick with the sound of bagpipes and Scots voices, reclaiming the streets of the capital.

EXT. LONDON CAFÉ - DAY: A group of young men in faded jeans and heavy work boots lounge on the pavement. Two are tuning battered acoustic guitars

while another expertly rolls a cigarette from a pouch of loose tobacco.

INT. THE SINGERS' CLUB - NIGHT: A young man with a Cockney accent stands on a small stage. He is strumming a vigorous rhythm, straining his voice to mimic the dust-bowl drawl of Woody Guthrie. EWAN watches from the wings, her expression shifting from curiosity to a frown.

INT. CONVERTED WAREHOUSE, GOODGE STREET: Haitian drummers with filed teeth play for BERT and EWAN.

INT. ABELABE CLUB, BREWER STREET – NIGHT: A group of young Black men attempt to impress BERT and EWAN with nose-flutes and thumb pianos.

END OF MONTAGE

40 **INT. BERT LLOYD'S OFFICE. 1956** **40**

BERT puts the phone down and picks up a thick wad of letters. EWAN is behind and waiting for BERT to turn around. BERT reads a letter and hunches his shoulders.

BERT
What we're short of is a five-string-banjo player, but we're in luck. There's one on the way.

EWAN
What's his name?

BERT
It's not a he: it's a she. Peggy Seeger. She's the best – the very best.

EWAN
(curious)
Any relation, or is that a stupid question?

BERT
Pete Seeger's sister – but about 15 years younger than him. She must get sick of everyone playing her older brother's songs everywhere she goes.

EWAN
So she's American. Why's she coming to London?

BERT
She's just been in Denmark and they've asked her to play the banjo in a performance of

"Dark of the Moon" for the BBC. I had a hand in that. I even rang Mr. Seeger to ask for Peggy's schedule on her little tour of Europe.

EWAN
Isn't she due to go back to America though?

BERT
They make all sorts of exceptions to who they let stay here. Pete Seeger might sing a few nice songs about social justice, but I don't think that the police will be keeping a file on Peggy as they are on me and you.

EWAN does not answer, but smiles.

41 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 41

The hum of the cameras is audible as DAVID BOULTON turns a page in his research folder. EWAN is watching him.

DAVID
It's clear that your parents meant everything to you and you speak about them a lot, but I don't hear you speaking so much about the families that you've made. You've been married three times. Joan Littlewood, Jean Newlove and Peggy Seeger. And from what I understand, remarkably, you are still in touch with all of them.

Ewan gives a short, dry nod.

EWAN
I don't believe in the scorched-earth policy of the heart, David. We were comrades before we were lovers and we remained comrades afterwards… Most of the time.

DAVID
Three wives and five children. Why do you not speak about them as much? I had to do quite a lot of research to piece it all together.

EWAN stares at DAVID, the silence stretching uncomfortably.

EWAN
(Steely)
Because it isn't important. No one is

interested in the domestic arrangements of an old singer. It is a private affair. It doesn't serve the history.

DAVID
Or perhaps it’s the most honest part of the history. The part where the revolutionary has to work outside the revolutionary struggle, perhaps even with those who don’t share his revolutionary ideals?

EWAN leans back, arms crossed.

DAVID
I get the impression that Joan and Peggy have been roughly on the same page as you, but a bit more moderate perhaps. I don’t know about Jean. Will any of your children follow you in writing the music for the revolution?

A ghost of a weary smile touches Ewan’s lips.

EWAN
(Dryly)
No. They belong to a generation that wants the revolution to have a better soundtrack and more comfortable shoes.

DAVID
Is that where the distance comes from? That they see your politics as a form of nostalgia for a time that they didn’t grow up in?

EWAN
(Sharply)
It isn't nostalgia to remember who built the shoulders you’re standing on. The socialist movement is only what it is now because of the sacrifices of those who went before us.

DAVID
And how did there come to be so many Communists working in folk music? You, Bert Lloyd, Alan Lomax, Luke Kelly and then your comrades in America.

EWAN’s eyes brighten. The defensive posture softens, just a fraction.

EWAN
Yes. Alan Lomax has been a great friend and comrade. I owe him a great deal.

DAVID

1956. The Ramblers with Alan Lomax. How did that group come about?

42 INT. ALAN LOMAX'S FLAT, CHELSEA, NIGHT, MARCH 1956 42

A room bursting at the seams. The air is a blue haze of Woodbines and pipe tobacco. Instruments are leaned against every available wall.

BERT LLOYD leans against a bookshelf, looking like a scholarly whaler; SEAMUS ENNIS cradles his uilleann pipes with a look of fierce concentration; and FITZROY COLEMAN coaxes a sophisticated, rhythmic jazz-tinged backing from his guitar.

EWAN (41) stands amongst them.

The door opens. ALAN LOMAX ushers in a young woman.

PEGGY SEEGER (21) looks impossibly young and dangerously bright. She carries a long-necked five-string banjo.

ALAN LOMAX
(Booming)
Quiet, you savages! This is Peggy. I told you she was coming.

The room settles into a curious, slightly patronising silence. Peggy doesn't shrink. She scans the room, spots a high wooden stool in the , and climbs up.

Because she is small, her feet don't reach the rungs; they dangle, swinging slightly, like a child's. She looks fragile until she rests the banjo on her knee.

She strikes the strings. The sound is a sharp, metallic crack that cuts through the whiskey-heavy atmosphere.

PEGGY
(Singing)
Well met, well met, my own true love
Well met, well met, cried he
I've just returned from the salt, salt sea

Her voice is clear, high, and chillingly precise. Her fingers move with a frantic, clawhammer brilliance.

EWAN is frozen. He watches her boots dangling. Beside him, BERT raises a rhythmic eyebrow, nodding

slowly. SEAMUS ENNIS closes his eyes, recognising a peer.

43 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, MANCHESTER, 1985 43

EWAN is staring at the studio floor, a small, private smile on his face.

EWAN
I'd spent my life looking for the "perfect" folk singer. I'd looked in the archives, in the libraries, in the memories of old men in bothy huts.

He looks up at DAVID.

EWAN
And there she was. Twenty-one years old, feet dangling off a stool, playing like an angel with a dirty face. Of course, she didn't just fall for my voice. She fell for the most disreputable-looking beggar in London.

44 INT. THE STRAND THEATRE - LONDON - NIGHT (1956) 44

The stage is a cavern of harsh, expressionist shadows. It is a production of Brecht's THE THREEPENNY OPERA.

EWAN (as the STREET SINGER) stands centre stage. He is an explosion of calculated filth. He wears a ragged, oversized jacket and ill-fitting trousers held up by straining suspenders. There is no shirt; his pale, hairy, prominently fat belly pokes out defiantly above his waistband. Atop his head, a filthy stovepipe hat sits aslant, looking less like headwear and more like a discarded garbage can lid.

EWAN
(singing)
Oh! The shark, babe, has such teeth, dear
And he shows them pearly white

IN THE AUDIENCE:

PEGGY sits in the dark, leaned forward, her chin resting on her hand.

45 INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS 45

The corridor is cramped, smelling of greasepaint and stale beer. Peggy pushes through the crowd of well-wishers and arrives at the dressing room door.

EWAN is there, still in his dustbin-lid hat, wiping a streak of stage-dirt from his forehead. He looks up and sees her.

PEGGY
(Breathless)
You were... it was wonderful. The songs, the way you moved... you looked like you'd been living under the floorboards of the theatre for a hundred years.

Ewan grins, patting his exposed belly with a self-deprecating laugh.

EWAN
It's a lot of work to look this wretched.

He looks at her properly, his gaze intense, stripping away the theatrical artifice.

EWAN
You're still in London, then? For the BBC?

PEGGY
For a few weeks. Then back to the States.

EWAN
(Stepping closer)
Don't be in such a hurry. We're starting a new club. Real singers, real politics. We're looking from somewhere around Camden for our Singers' Club.

PEGGY
I think I'd like that, but I also need to get my visa renewed. These things are all so complicated.

46 EXT. LONDON STREETS - NIGHT (1956) 46

A battered, blue FORD VAUXHALL rattles through the quiet, lamp-lit streets of London. The engine has a rough, working-class cough.

INT. FORD VAUXHALL - CONTINUOUS

The interior smells of stale tobacco and old leather. EWAN is at the wheel, driving with a restless energy, his eyes fixed on the road ahead. PEGGY sits in the passenger seat, her banjo case squeezed between her knees. There is silence.

EWAN pulls the car to a shuddering halt outside Peggy's lodgings. He doesn't turn the engine off

immediately. He sits for a moment, hands gripping the steering wheel.

Then he turns to her and gazes.

EWAN
I’m going to make love to you, Peggy.

PEGGY freezes.

PEGGY
(Breathless)
You... you certainly don't believe in the slow approach, do you?

She looks down at his hands on the wheel. In the dim light of the streetlamp, the gold of a WEDDING RING glints on his finger.

EWAN notices her gaze. He doesn’t pull his hand away.

EWAN
I don’t have the time to ask for permission for everything.

He reaches out, his hand moving from the wheel to the side of her face. He leans in and kisses her.

Peggy pulls back, her hand fumbling for the door handle. The lock clicks open with a loud, mechanical snap.

PEGGY
I... I have to go. I have a rehearsal in the morning.

She practically falls out of the car, clutching her banjo case to her chest like a shield.

EWAN
(Calling after her)
The rehearsal’s at ten. I’ll be there at nine-thirty.

PEGGY doesn't look back. She hurries toward the darkened doorway of her house. Behind her, the blue Vauxhall engine revs before pulling away into the fog.

47 INT. MACCOLL HOUSEHOLD - NIGHT (1956) 47

The flat is quiet now. The only light comes from a small bedside lamp in the corner of the nursery.

EWAN sits on the edge of HAMISH'S bed. The boy is tucked in tight, his eyes heavy, his small hand resting on EWAN's knee. The lines on EWAN's face are clear in the light.

EWAN
(a gravelly whipser)
That's another day gone by, son, close your eyes
Now the moon is chasing clouds across the skies
Go to sleep and have no fear, son
For your mam and dad are near, son
And the darkness is just a shadow on the wall

As he sings, Ewan's gaze wanders to the door.

There is the sound of JEAN moving in the kitchen, including the clink of a milk bottle and the click of a cupboard.

EWAN
(Singing)
Close your eyes. When you wake, it will be light
There's no need to fear the darkness of the night
It's not like the dark you find, son
In the dark of some men's minds, son
That defies the daily coming of the dawn

EWAN looks down at HAMISH. The boy is asleep. EWAN reaches out and brushes a lock of hair from HAMISH's forehead.

EWAN
Maybe it was all for the best that Peggy had that rehearsal in the morning.

JEAN comes into the room. Realising that HAMISH is asleep, she doesn't speak. She mouths "is he asleep?" to EWAN. EWAN nods.

JEAN smiles. EWAN cannot.

48 INT. BBC OFFICES - LONDON - DAY (1957) 48

A cramped office, thick with the smell of stale coffee and the mechanical clatter of typewriters.

CHARLES PARKER (38), a man with short brown hair and a goatee beard, leans over a desk cluttered with tape reels. PEGGY stands by the window, looking out at the gray London sky. EWAN sits in a wooden chair, watching her.

CHARLES
(Into the telephone)
Look, the Home Office has to understand—this isn't just a folk singer. She’s a specialist. We are midway through the "John Axon" recordings. We’re creating a new form of documentary here. You can’t just deport the lead instrumentalist halfway through a revolution!

CHARLES slams the phone down. He looks at PEGGY, then EWAN.

CHARLES
They’re wavering. The BBC’s legal department is pushing back. I think we can get you another six months, Peggy. But they’re making it clear—this is the last "cultural exemption."

PEGGY
(Turning from the window)
Six months. And then what, Charles? Another frantic trip to the embassy? I feel like a fugitive. I can’t live my life in six-month installments. Eventually, they’re going to say no. And I’ll have to go back.

CHARLES sighs, grabs a stack of tapes, and heads for the door.

CHARLES
We’ll worry about "eventually" when we’ve finished the edit. I’ll go see the Director-General.

CHARLES exits. EWAN stands up, moving toward PEGGY.

EWAN
If they send you back... how do I reach you? How do we keep this going across an ocean?

Peggy reaches into her bag, pulls out a small scrap of paper, and scribbles a number on it. She hands it to him.

PEGGY
That’s the house in New York. My mother

usually answers. You can try, Ewan, but three thousand miles of Atlantic is a long way for a phone line to travel.

She looks him dead in the eye, her expression shifting from logistics to something sharper.

PEGGY
(fiesty)
And what exactly are you going to tell them when you call? "Hello, this is the man who's still married to someone else"?

EWAN flinches. He looks away, toward the tape recorders.

EWAN
(embarrassed)
I'm working on it, Peggy. It's... it's complicated. The children, the Theatre Workshop, the years Jean and I have put in…

PEGGY
(Interrupting)
Have you told her?

EWAN
Not... not in so many words. I don't want to destroy her.

PEGGY
You're destroying her by staying, and you're destroying me by waiting. You're a man who writes songs about "taking a stand", Well, take one.

PEGGY picks up her banjo case. She walks out. EWAN stands alone in the office, the scrap of paper clutched in his hand, as the reels of the tape recorder spin in a mindless, empty circle.

49 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 49

DAVID
Of course, the most successful writing of yours was never sung by you at all. It was written for Peggy.

EWAN
Written for Peggy and covered by a dozen of horror-film characters thereafter.

DAVID
(humorous)
And now used in an advert for face cream.

EWAN
I don’t mind that so much as some of the covers.

DAVID
Do you mind that what you’ve written is being used in that way?

EWAN
There’s ups and downs. It gave us a lot of royalties. That money gave us the safety to feel free to experiment. I’m not sure if we could have ever made the radio ballads without it. We needed the financial safety that the working man usually doesn’t have.

50 **INT. MACCOLL HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - NIGHT (1957)** **50**

The kitchen is bathed in the dim, yellow glow of a single overhead bulb. The house is silent, save for the hum of the refrigerator. EWAN stands by the wall-mounted telephone, the cord twisted around his fingers.

He dials a long string of numbers—the international operator, then the American exchange. He waits through the oceanic static, the rhythmic pip-pip-pip of the long-distance connection.

PEGGY (V.O.)
Hello?

EWAN
(A breath of relief)
It’s me again.

INT. SEEGER HOUSEHOLD - AMERICA - DAY

PEGGY sits on the floor, the phone pressed to her ear. Sunlight streams through a window behind her, a sharp contrast to the London night. She has a notebook open and a banjo leaning against her leg.

PEGGY
Ewan. I wasn't expecting another call today. These minutes on the phone cost more than our rent.

EWAN (V.O.)
I had to hear your voice. The silence in this house is getting... loud, Peggy.

PEGGY
(Softening)
I know. Listen, I’m frantic here. I’ve got a

gig at a college in two days and I’m short on material. I need something new. Not a ballad about the Spanish Civil War or the first day at work. Something... different.

INT. MACCOLL HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS
Ewan leans his forehead against the cold wallpaper. He closes his eyes.

EWAN
I wrote something. Last night. I couldn't sleep, so I sat in the dark and wrote something for you to use

PEGGY (V.O.)
(Quietly)
Let me hear it.

Ewan clears his throat. He doesn't have an instrument. He sings a cappella, his voice low and vibrating with an intimacy that makes the kitchen feel smaller.

EWAN
(Singing)
The first time ever I saw your face
I thought the sun rose in your eyes
And the moon and the stars were the gifts you gave
To the dark and the empty skies, my love...

INT. SEEGER HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS
Peggy is still. Her pen is poised over the notebook, but she isn't writing. She’s just listening. The lyrics are a departure—unabashedly romantic, devoid of the "Policy," purely personal.

EWAN (V.O.)
(Singing*)*
The first time ever I kissed your mouth
I felt the earth move in my hand...
Like the tremdbling heart of a captive bird
That was there at my command, my love

INT. MACCOLL HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS
Ewan’s voice grows steadier, more intense. He is no longer singing to an audience; he is singing to the only person who matters.

EWAN
(singing)
And the first time ever I laid with you

And felt your heart next to mine
I thought our joy would fill the earth
And last till the end of time, my love

INT. SEEGER HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS
Peggy blinks, a small, nervous laugh escaping her.

PEGGY
Wait. Ewan. "The first time ever I laid with you"?

EWAN (V.O.)
(Defensive)
It’s the truth, isn't it?

PEGGY
It’s the truth, but I’m playing a Christian college in Ohio, Ewan. That line might raise more than a few eyebrows. They consider “I think we’re alone now” as a seditious song.

EWAN (V.O.)
(A dry chuckle)
I don’t know what that song is, but many a good song has survived despite condemnation from the powers that be.

Peggy looks at the phone, then at her banjo. She bites her lip, a smile forming.

PEGGY
It’s beautiful. Terribly beautiful. I’ll try it. But if I get chased out of Ohio by a mob of angry deans, I’m sending the bill to London.

EWAN (V.O.)
(Softly)
I’ll pay it. Every penny. I miss you, Peggy.

PEGGY
(A pause)
I miss you too. I have to go. My mother’s looking at the clock.

The line goes dead with a hollow, metallic click.

51 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 51

DAVID
Are you a Marxist?

EWAN
Of course, I’m a Marxist. Anyone with my background could not fail to be a revolutionary.

DAVID
Have you read Marx?

EWAN hesitates.

EWAN
I read more of Engels. He was our old friend in Salford, describing the world that we saw around us. We used to say to one another, “That’s the building that old Friedrich wrote about.”

DAVID
What made you decide to be on the side of Marxism?

EWAN
It’s my background and my family.

DAVID
I’ve written a book on the Ulster Volunteer Force. Plenty of working-class people in Northern Ireland would say that their background and their family means that they need to support Ulster Loyalism.

EWAN
Surely not. What do the working-class of Belfast have in common with the ruling class of Britain?

DAVID
Do you remember the Ulster Workers’ Council strike? Was that the only strike that you didn’t support?

EWAN
That was a reactionary movement with nothing to do with socialism. It was all about dividing the working class against one another to keep them weak.

DAVID
Did you support the Ulster Workers’ Council strike?

EWAN
No, of course not.

DAVID
So strikes are not always positive.

EWAN
That was a mobilisation of a section of the working-class behind the interests of the ruling class in Northern Ireland to prevent the ruling class from losing its power, which would have happened if the working class had been united.

DAVID smiles.

DAVID
I used to believe that as well.

There is a pause.

DAVID
You don’t seem to have written much on Ireland.

EWAN
Not many songs on Ireland, no. It’s not something that I pretend to have new insights on. I’ve worked with some very great Irishmen though, and I enjoyed my fieldwork with the Irish Travellers. I worked with Luke Kelly and I always hoped that he would take over the Critics Group.

DAVID
Ah! I know Luke Kelly of the Dubliners.

EWAN
I imagine that you only know “Protect and Survive”.

DAVID
(smiling)
And “The Button Pusher”, which I prefer.

EWAN
(nostalgic)
That was written by a man named Enoch Kent. I wonder whatever happened to him.

52 **INT. PINDAR OF WAKEFIELD PUB, AFTERNOON, 1963** **52**

EWAN (48) sit son one table. LUKE KELLY (23), a big man with long brown hair, is sitting on another with three empty glasses before him. His guitar sits by his side. ENOCH KENT (30s), wearing a CND badge, sits somewhat between the two tables.

LUKE KELLY
(Dublin, jolly)
Ha ha! That’s a very good song, Enoch. Do you mind if I perform that myself with my band.

ENOCH KENT
(Scots)
No, I don’t mind at all.

LUKE
Ha! It should get a laugh out of everyone.

EWAN doesn’t laugh and looks more serious.

EWAN
Luke, I’m going out to Hertfordshire with Peggy and with Charles Parker from the BBC soon.

LUKE
(interrupting from drunkenness)
Can Charles Parker share his chocolate this time? Ha ha!

EWAN
(serious)
I’m sure he can. We’re doing a radio ballad with the Irish Travellers. I’d like you to come with me. Will you come?

LUKE stops laughing for a moment.

LUKE
You want me to help with a radio ballad on Irish Travellers. Is that just because I’m Irish?

EWAN
Well, it’s looking at their traditions and folklore and songs. They retain things that might have died out amongst the rest of us. It might be interesting for you as an exercise in Irish folklore.

LUKE
(polite)
I’m not sure if that’s really for me, thanks all the same. I’m trying to get a record deal for my band, since we’re doing quite well across Britain and Ireland now.

EWAN

What? You're thinking of getting a record deal.

LUKE
Yes, and call it "The Dubliners". Nice and simple.

EWAN
(slow and considered)
Luke… is that really the best thing for you? You have a brilliant voice and are a great talent. Why not stay here and keep building the Critics Club?

LUKE
I didn't realise that you wanted that.

EWAN
Well, I'd not mentioned it yet. You're still a young man – but I'm starting to get on a bit. I had in mind that you might be the man to take things over. I thought that coming out to Hertfordshire with us would allow me to teach you further and allow you to take it on.

LUKE is surprised and pauses.

LUKE
That's a great honour. I appreciate that you say those things of me.

EWAN
But your mind's set on the Dubliners?

LUKE
I'm afraid so, Ewan. That doesn't mean that I'm leaving the Critics' Club though. I'll still come here when I'm not on tour.

EWAN
(disbelieving)
Yes, of course.

EWAN is visibly upset. ENOCH gets up and leaves the room.

53 INT. EWAN's CAR, 1963 **53**

EWAN drives his blue Vauxhall up the motorway. PEGGY is sat in the passenger's seat. CHARLES is in the back seat.

PEGGY

How are we supposed to find a Traveller camp?

EWAN
We have a map and names.

PEGGY
(unconvinced)
That’s not how we usually do things for these radio ballads.

EWAN
Once you know one of them, you know about a hundred. They introduce you to all their family and relatives and so on.

CHARLES is eating chocolate in the back.

PEGGY
(to CHARLES)
Nice little snack there?

CHARLES
Very nice.

PEGGY waits and then turns back.

PEGGY
What are you going to ask and what am I going to ask?

EWAN
The goal is to get to their songs, traditions and how they’re changing in this modern world. I doubt that they’ll still be taking the caravan and trailer everywhere for long now.

PEGGY ponders.

54 EXT. TRAVELLER CARAVAN, 1963 54

GRACE, a small and stout man with black hair, is boiling water on a stove. EWAN, PEGGY and CHARLES are sitting on small wooden chairs.

GRACE gets out his crockery. CHARLES notices that there is some muck inside one of the cups.

GRACE
(Irish Travaller cant)
A nice of cup of tea solves everything.

GRACE pours three cups.

CHARLES
(interrupting)
Not for me, thanks.

GRACE pauses and glares at CHARLES.

GRACE
Whyever not?

CHARLES
I’m fine. I’ve had plenty to eat and drink today.

GRACE does not smile or nod.

GRACE
You come to see me to learn about my ways and then you don’t have a cup of tea.

EWAN looks at CHARLES and tries to motion to him to accept.

CHARLES
(oblivious)
I just don’t feel like a cup of tea right now.

EWAN
(interrupting)
Me and Peggy would love to have your tea. Please excuse our friend here. He’s not feeling that well.

GRACE
(weary)
Ah so, I’ll just make tea for the two of yous.

EWAN
Do you still travel from town to town and do tinkering at different times of the year?

GRACE
Not so much any more. The old ways are a-changing. We’ve not moved from here in about two years now. I don’t want all the old ways to go though. I don’t want to be like one of these people who’s a slave to their watches, always having to be here on this day and there on that day. Why not have a rest now and again?

EWAN smiles.

55 INT. BBC RECORDING STUDIO, 1964 55

CHARLES is sat in the listening room with an ENGINEER. EWAN is singing with his hand cupped around his ear as always. PEGGY is holding her banjo but not yet playing)

EWAN
(singing)
O, the Gypsy is a gentleman, give credit where it's due,
He never parks his caravan where it can spoil the view;
And if you find a pony grazing in your garden plot,
Don't blame the noble Gypsy, but that awful tinker lot!

CHARLES
I can then put in a comment from one of the locals about Tinkers' horses' going around the village.

PEGGY
(cautious)
Is this going to go down well with Grace and our guests?

EWAN
How do you mean?

PEGGY
"That awful Tinker lot". That's not exactly celebrating their culture, is it?

EWAN
Well, we're just reporting on what we've heard. We are showing the Gypsies' and Tinkers' way of life, but we're showing what the Gorgios think of them as well.

CHARLES
It does work quite well with some of the other material that we recorded.

PEGGY
I'm not entirely sure about this.

EWAN
(sighing)
Oh well!

PEGGY picks up her banjo and starts to play a rhythm to go with the lyrics. The others are quiet

and listen to her playing.

56 EXT. JEAN’S HOUSE - CROYDON - DAY (1968) 56

A bright, suburban Sunday. The street is quiet. EWAN’S car, a sensible but slightly dusty saloon, pulls up to the curb.

JEAN NEWLOVE (47) stands by the front gate, shielding her eyes from the sun. She’s wearing an apron; the smell of roasting meat wafts from the open front door. HAMISH (18) and KIRSTY (9) are visible through the living room window, bickering over a record player.

EWAN climbs out of the driver’s side. He looks older, his hair silvering. He doesn't go to the boot; instead, he opens the front passenger door.

JEAN freezes.

Sitting in the passenger seat is a small BOY (4 or 5), with a mop of dark hair and curious eyes. He’s clutching a small toy.

EWAN lifts the boy out and sets him on the pavement. He leads him toward the gate by the hand.

JEAN
(Hushed)
Ewan? Who on earth is this?

Ewan doesn't look sheepish. He looks at the boy with a matter-of-fact pride.

EWAN
This is Callum.

JEAN stares at the child. She looks at EWAN, then back at the boy.

JEAN
Callum. Your son. With Peggy.

EWAN
(Nodding)
He wanted to see the car. I thought it was time he had an outing.

JEAN
(Voice trembling with rising anger)
Time he had an outing? Ewan, he’s five years old! You’ve been coming here every Sunday for

years. You’ve sat at my table, played with Kirsty, argued with Hamish... and you never once mentioned you had another son?

EWAN
(Calmly)
I didn't see the tactical necessity of complicating the Sunday lunch, Jean. I keep my lives in order.

JEAN
“Tactical necessity”? He’s a human being, not a pamphlet! How many more are there? Is there a whole hidden choir I don’t know about?

EWAN remains silent. He looks down at CALLUM, who is watching JEAN with wide eyes. JEAN sees the boy’s confusion and her anger softens into a sharp, weary pity.

JEAN
(Sighing)
God, you’re an impossible man. You want to lead the working class to the promised land, but you can’t even introduce your own children to each other.

She opens the gate wider.

JEAN
Well, don't just stand there on the pavement. Bring him in!

EWAN looks at her, a flicker of genuine respect crossing his face.

EWAN
Neill’s a bit older. He might be a handful for Kirsty.

JEAN
Kirsty can handle a battalion of Neills. Bring them both next time.

Ewan nods slowly. He leads Callum toward the house.

EWAN
Next Sunday, then. All of them.

JEAN
(clearly)
Tell me, Ewan. Are there any others?

EWAN

No.

JEAN
Did you have any children with Joan?

EWAN
(surprised)
No… Whatever made you ask that?

JEAN
I can remember, back when you got arrested at Ormesby, asking Joan that question. She said “no”, but I got a feeling that she was hiding something from me.

EWAN pauses.

EWAN
(quietly)
Joan aborted my child.

JEAN’s mouth opens.

JEAN
(unsure how to react)
Joan had an abortion? In the 1940s?

EWAN
Yes, Joan had an illegal abortion. We kept it quiet for obvious reasons. I would have wanted the child myself, but it was her decision.

JEAN
I don’t know what to say.

There is a pause of a few minutes.

EWAN
How is Kirsty’s health?

JEAN
Not good.

EWAN
It’s the city air, Jean. It’s the filth of the industries. It’s killing the spirit. She needs the hills.

JEAN
She needs antibiotics and a nebuliser, Ewan.

EWAN

(Warming to his own idea)
No, listen. When she’s out of here, she needs the Peak District. The air on Kinder Scout... it clears the lungs. You should take her camping. Take Hamish. Get a tent, get up into the high country. It would be the making of her.

Jean stares at him. She doesn't blink. The silence is broken only by Kirsty’s wheezing.

JEAN
Camping?

EWAN
We went with Hamish when he was young.

JEAN
(Voice rising, sharp)
You are suggesting that I, a single mother with a teenage son and a chronically-ill daughter, should take a Primus stove and a piece of canvas into a rainy field in Derbyshire?

EWAN
It worked for me and my mates, Jean. It’s about resilience.

JEAN
It’s about delusion, Ewan! You live in a world of ballads about Travellers and revolutions that are never going to come off, but I live in a world of prescriptions and damp flats. She can barely walk to the corner shop, and you want her climbing mountains?

EWAN
I was only trying to offer a perspective.

JEAN
(Quietly, devastatingly)
You can offer more than that. She needs you, Ewan. People recognise you in public, but your only daughter barely recognises you.

EWAN looks stung, his jaw tightening. He looks back at KIRSTY.

57 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 57

The atmosphere in the studio shifts. The nostalgic glow of the 1950s and 60s evaporates, replaced by

the cold, jagged tension of the present. DAVID BOULTON shifts in his chair, his expression no longer inquisitive, but troubled.

DAVID
We’re talking about the past as if it’s a finished song, Ewan. But outside these doors, in the coalfields, the song is turning into a wake. This strike... it’s been a year of the most bitter industrial violence this country has seen in a century.

EWAN stiffens.

EWAN
It’s a war, David. Let’s not use polite Granada euphemisms. It’s an attempt by the state to break the spine of the working class. If the miners are fighting back, they’re doing what any cornered animal does.

DAVID
(Leaning forward)
But does it have to be a war? Do we have to have the the screaming at the picket lines, the bricks, the raw hatred?

EWAN
(Sharply)
“The raw hatred”? That’s the pacifist’s trap, isn't it? To stand in the middle while one side has the truncheons, the horses, and the entire weight of the law, and the other has nothing but their bare hands and a bit of grit. The violence at Orgreave wasn't started by men in donkey jackets, David. It was a cavalry charge against a civilian population. The police are the aggressors. Always.

DAVID
I can follow you on Orgreave. But what about the others? What about Michael Fletcher, a working miner beaten in his own home in front of his family? Or David Wilkie? A taxi driver just doing his job, killed by a concrete block dropped from a bridge by two young strikers.

EWAN’s jaw works silently for a moment. He looks down at his hands, then back at DAVID.

EWAN
Those are tragedies. Individual, terrible tragedies. But you cannot judge a class

movement by its casualties. When you push a community to the edge of starvation, when you tell a man his father’s life meant nothing and his son has no future, you create a pressure cooker.

DAVID
How do you feel about David Wilkie’s family?

EWAN
I feel very sorry them. But the state creates the conditions for violence, and then acts shocked when the blood starts to flow. You want a "clean" revolution, David. You want everyone to sit in a circle and reach a consensus while the pits are filled with concrete. It doesn't work that way. The NUM is the only thing standing between those families and the scrapheap. If they’re angry, they have every right to be.

DAVID
(Quietly)
The police didn’t break into Michael Fletcher’s house and break his bones whilst his pregnant wife cowered.

EWAN is uncomfortable in his seat.

EWAN
Very well. It went too far.

DAVID
Went too far indeed!

EWAN
But what of all the things that we don’t hear about in this media? Have we all forgotten of David Jones, who was hit by a brick thrown at him whilst picketing? Arthur Scargill was woken by the police that night. He held a minute’s silence in honour of David Jones and then told the crowd to go home. Had it not been for this man, who is so hated in our media, there would have been a riot that night.

DAVID
You have a point there, Ewan.

DAVID pauses and considers this.

DAVID
(Quietly)

This is your seventieth birthday year, Ewan. A time for the grand tally.

EWAN watches him, his hands folded on the table.

DAVID
You look back on a “Revolutionary Theatre” that is now, to most people, simply a historical curiosity. You look back on a folk revival that came... and receded.

DAVID gestures to the dark corners of the studio.

DAVID
You look back on a political party divided—a leadership you’d call revisionist and right-wing. And you look back on a working class that, by and large, has failed to grasp your message.

DAVID pauses.

DAVID
Is it a happy seventieth birthday for you? Or is it a wake?

EWAN doesn't blink.

EWAN
If one were worried about backing a loser, David, one would never take part in politics.

He leans forward, into the light.

EWAN
Anyone involved in working-class struggle has to be prepared that, for most of their life, they’re going to be on the losing side of the battle. If I’d been afraid of that, I’d have packed in, in 1929.

FLASH CUT (Silent):
A young, hungry JIMMY MILLER in Salford, standing on a soapbox in the rain.

EWAN (V.O.)
I wouldn’t have spent the thirties trying to alert people to Franco or Mussolini or Hitler. I would have given up on every struggle since.

INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

EWAN

One goes on fighting because one has to. Because the alternative is to let the darkness win by default.

DAVID
But the cost, Ewan... the hardship of the strikes and the picketing and the attempts at revolution that have not delivered a better life for anyone.

EWAN looks directly into the lens of the camera—past DAVID, past the crew, to the audience at home. A small, genuine smile breaks the granite of his face.

EWAN
The struggle itself has been good. The struggle... has been marvellous.

DAVID pauses.

DAVID
Thank you, Ewan. We're almost out of time here.

EWAN
(interrupting)
Can I just ask you a few questions please?

DAVID
If you're quick about it.

EWAN
Our next cassette is going to be in aid of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. How do you feel about that?

DAVID
I'm against Apartheid. I think that there's a political consensus on that now after a long fight.

EWAN
You like to tinker around the edges and make things better here and there. How would you do that if you lived in South Africa now.

DAVID frowns.

DAVID
How do you mean?

EWAN
When you preach that change must come through

peaceful means and consensus, do you ever think that maybe the whole system is rotten? If you can’t see that about our system in this country, can you see it about South Africa?

DAVID
Do you mean whether I’d obey the law at all there?

EWAN
Yes. Is the law itself part of the oppression?

DAVID
Well, I wouldn’t go around robbing and killing, but then I wouldn’t do that regardless of the law.

EWAN
Exactly. Consider whether sometimes we need to rely on our innate humanity instead of the laws made for us to obey.

DAVID
Thank you for that last though. I’m afraid that’s all that we have time for. We’ll have to bring that to an end quickly.

CAMERA MAN (V.O.)
And… roll the credits!

58 INT. GRANADA TV STUDIO, 1985 58

The harsh overhead studio lights suddenly flicker and brighten to full “house” levels. FLOOR MANAGERS begin unclipping lapel microphones. The red "ON AIR" light kills.

DAVID exhales a long, weary breath. He looks at EWAN, who is still sitting perfectly still.

DAVID
(Softly)
That’s a wrap, Ewan. Thank you. It was... well, it was everything I hoped it would be. Even the parts where we bruised each other.

EWAN blinks. He offers a short, formal nod of acknowledgment. DAVID leans forward.

DAVID
Let’s end on something a bit less... tectonic. What’s next on the tape recorder? I

assume you aren't retiring to a garden in Beckenham just yet.

EWAN stands up, smoothing his jacket. The mention of work brings a fresh spark to his eyes.

EWAN
No, we're back in the thick of it. Peggy and the children—the whole family is involved. We're working on a new project. "White Wind, Black Tide."

DAVID
(Interested)
Another Radio Ballad?

EWAN
In spirit, yes but it'll just be on cassette. But the subject is South Africa. We've been spending our evenings in basement flats and community s across London, interviewing the exiles. The Anti-Apartheid activists. We're capturing the songs of the townships and the testimonies of those the Pretoria regime tried to erase.

David smiles, a look of genuine warmth and relief.

DAVID
I'm glad to hear it. And I'm glad you're the one doing some interviews, Ewan. Whatever our differences on Stalin and Scargill, there is no "middle ground" on Apartheid. Your voice there... it's always been on the right side of history.

EWAN pauses. He looks at DAVID.

DAVID
You say that the whole family is involved.

EWAN
Well, not Kirsty. I can never persuade her to get involved with these things. She won't be told.

DAVID
Ah! I have one of her records: "Guy works down the chip shop swears he's Elvis". I found that quite funny.

EWAN
(sighing)
Aye… (imitating Scots) *She's her ain worst*

enemy.

DAVID
You've given so much of your life to music and to politics. I hope that you don't mind if I give you one word of advice.

EWAN
(curious)
What's that?

DAVID
Don't… don't forget the simple joys of day-to-day living with your family! You're not as young as you used to be. You're going to need those children, and eventually grandchildren, as you get older.

EWAN
Peggy's still young.

DAVID
Yes, she is. But even if the international proletariat doesn't achieve victory in your lifetime, there'll still be your family.

EWAN
All right, I'll consider that. I hope that this will bring most of us together.

DAVID reaches out for a respectful shake of the hand.

DAVID
Goodbye… Jimmy.

EWAN nods.

59 INT. EWAN'S STUDY - BECKENHAM - DAY (1981) 59

The room is a fortress of folk history: floor-to-ceiling shelves of vinyl, field recordings, and political tracts. EWAN is at his desk, peering through spectacles at a tracklist. KIRSTY (21) sits opposite him, looking restless, wearing a leather jacket.

EWAN
Peggy's nearly finished the new project. It's a collection of women's traditional songs, Appalachian and Eastern seaboard. She's keen to have a "family chorus" on a few tracks. She asked if you'd come in and lend a harmony.

Kirsty shifts in her chair, her expression hardening.

KIRSTY
(Flatly)
American folk?

EWAN
It’s the roots, Kirsty. The pure stuff. It would be a good exercise for you. To strip away the artifice and find the bone of the melody.

KIRSTY
I don’t do “the bone”, Dad. I do the skin, the muscle, and the three-part pop harmony. I don’t do American folk. I’m from Croydon.

EWAN
(Patiently)
Well, if Peggy’s willing to have you singing American songs, that’s a compliment that she doesn’t give out to many British peopel. You have a remarkable voice – I’ve always said that – but you’re wasting it on these... these transient three-minute trifles.

Kirsty stands up, her temper finally snapping.

KIRSTY
“Trifles”? I’ve just had a hit record, Dad! People are singing my lines in the street! But to you, it’s just noise because it’s got a chorus that isn't about a strike or a caravan or going fishing for herring.

EWAN
It lacks the political weight…

KIRSTY
(Cutting him off)
It doesn't lack anything! I wrote “Chip Shop” just to prove I could do my own thing. To prove I didn't have to wait for your Committee to approve my chord changes. You think your disapproval is a badge of honour for me? It’s a weight, Dad.

She gestures towards the hallway.

KIRSTY
I see Hamish. I see him agonising over every line he writes, terrified that if he shows

even a flicker of pop influence, you'll look at him like he's betrayed the whole family heritage. He's paralysed by you! Well, I'm not. I'm not going to be another MacColl disciple waiting for a pat on the head for singing a ballad from a strike that no one remembers.

EWAN's eyes flicker with a rare moment of uncertainty.

EWAN
I only want the work to matter, Kirsty.

KIRSTY
It matters to me. For you, Steeleye Span were going too far. Fairport Convention were basically counter-revolutionaries.

She walks to the door, turning back one last time.

KIRSTY
Tell Peggy thanks, but no. I'm busy being a "transient trifle". It's much more fun than being a monument.

She exits. EWAN sits in the silence of the study, the tracklist still in his hand, the sound of the front door slamming echoing through the house of folk. EWAN sighs and hangs his head.

60 INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LONDON - DAY (1985) 60

The studio is a labyrinth of cables, instrument cases, and overflowing ashtrays. Unlike the clinical void of the Granada studio, this space is alive with the hum of amplifiers and the smell of toasted sandwiches.

NEILL MACCOLL (26) and CALLUM MACCOLL (22) are already at the mixing desk, looking like the new guard in their denim and leather jackets. They are hunched over a track sheet, speaking in the rapid-fire shorthand of producers.

HARUN COOMBES, the engineer, is adjusting a microphone over DAVE LARCOMBE'S drum kit. In the corner, TUNDE JEGEDE sits cross-legged, tuning a beautiful, intricate KORA.

The heavy soundproof door swings open. EWAN and PEGGY enter. EWAN carries a thermos and a thick folder of lyrics; PEGGY carries her guitar case. Following them is KITTY (12), nervous about her

singing part.

CALLUM
(Without looking up)
You’re twenty minutes late, Dad. We’ve already got the levels on the Kora and the piano.

EWAN stops, his coat half-off. He looks at his sons with a mixture of pride and protectiveness.

EWAN
Sorry, I wasn’t feeling myself. I was getting these pains in my heart.

NEILL
(Pointing to a stool)
Just get in the booth. We want to try the vocal on "The Inquest" while the energy’s up. And Peggy, we need a cleaner line on the guitar—none of that folk-club "thump" on the wood. We’re going for a sharp, modern edge on this one.

PEGGY raises an eyebrow at her sons. She shares a look with EWAN.

PEGGY
(To Ewan)
You see? We raised them to be revolutionaries, and now they’re overthrowing us before lunch.

EWAN
(Grinning)
I think that it might be time for me to be overthrown.

KITTY jumps onto a high stool near the back.

KITTY
Can we just sing? I’ve got homework and I’m bored of the politics.

NEILL
Right. Everyone in. Harun, is the tape rolling?

HARUN
Rolling.

EWAN steps into the glass-walled vocal booth. He adjusts the headphones over his ears. Through the

glass, he sees his family: NEILL and CALLUM at the helm, KITTY waiting for her cue, PEGGY tuning up.

There is a moment of friction as NEILL gives a sharp instruction to PHIL DI PALMA on the second drum kit, and EWAN starts to interject, but stops himself.

EWAN
(Into the mic, voice rich and steady)
Ready when you are, lads. Let’s see if we can give the ANC something they can march to.

NEIL hits the talkback button.

NEILL
Less “operatic” this time, Dad. Just the facts. One, two... three...

EWAN stands by the mixing desk, listening intently. Beside him, TUNDE JEGEDE (14, a prodigy) cradles his KORA, the delicate strings still vibrating. FIROZ SHAPUR sits at the PIANO, his fingers resting on the keys.

EWAN
(singing)
Where is your daddy, son?
Where has your daddy gone?
Why doesn’t he live at home?
Wh did he go away?
Why does he stay away?
Why does he leave you and your mammy alone?

EWAN
(To Tunde)
That run you did after the second verse... it sounds like rainfall on a tin roof. It’s perfect. It gives the song a geography it didn't have when I wrote it in a cold room in Beckenham.

TUNDE
(Modest)
The Kora is a storyteller’s instrument, Ewan. It knows how to carry a tragedy without breaking under the weight.

FIROZ
And the piano provides the bone-structure. It’s a funeral march and a cradle-song all at

once.

NEILL leans over the talkback mic, looking at the room through the glass.

NEILL
It’s a strong take. We’ve got it.

HARUN, the engineer, starts marking the tape box. He looks up at the crowded room—the session musicians, the family, the activists in the corner.

HARUN
I’ve got the invoices for the tape and the studio time covered by the grant, but I need the session sheets for the rest of you. For the union rates.

PEGGY looks up from her guitar, a small smile playing on her lips.

PEGGY
You can put your pen away, Harun. There are no session fees today.

EWAN
(To Harun)
Everyone in this room—from the Kora to the Lead Guitar—is giving their services gratis. We aren't here to line our pockets with the struggle of the townships.

FIROZ
Every penny of the profit goes to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. To the exiles, the families of the prisoners, the ones who can't sing for themselves today.

EWAN puts a hand on TUNDE’s shoulder, then nods to FIROZ.

EWAN
In the old days, we used to say “Music is a weapon”. Well, today, it’s a direct contribution to the war chest. If we can’t be on the front lines in Pretoria, we can at least make sure the ones who are have the resources to keep fighting.

NEILL
(Dryly)
Right. Since we’re all working for the cause, can we do one more take of the bridge? Dad, you’re dragging the tempo again. The "cause"

needs to stay in time.

EWAN
Aye, Captain. Back to the salt mines.

The final chords of "SOWETO" ring out—a collision of Tunde’s kora, the crashing thunder of the double drums, and a wall of MacColl family harmonies.

EWAN (V.O.)
(Recorded, booming over the monitors)
Soweto: a word for murder
Soweto means fascit terror
Soweto: a word for death
Tanks opposing naked flesh
Soweto! Soweto!

The sound dies away into a long, hissing silence. No one moves. HARUN keeps his hand off the fader, letting the room breathe.

In the vocal booth, EWAN stands with his eyes closed, his chest still heaving from the exertion of the lead vocal. PEGGY is leaning against the wall, her head bowed. Even the younger MacColls—NEILL, CALLUM, and KITTY look uncharacteristically hushed.

TUNDE slowly rests his kora on its stand. He looks at EWAN through the glass.

Finally, NEILL breaks the silence, his voice unusually thick.

NEILL
That’s it. That’s the end of the record. We don’t need another take. We won’t get one better than that.

CALLUM
(Quietly)
It’s a hell of a way to finish, Dad.

EWAN steps out of the booth, wiping his brow. Everyone stands up from their chairs.

61 INT. MACCOLL HOUSEHOLD - BECKENHAM - DAY (OCTOBER 1989) 61

The television is showing a story about a music concert at the Berlin Wall.

EWAN
(speaking to the television)
How provocative! They must have known how the DDR Government would react!

The telephone, sat on a cluttered hallway table, rings with a sharp, insistent trill.

A hand reaches for it—slower than it used to be, the skin thinner, the grip less certain.

EWAN (74) picks up the phone. He is sitting in a sturdy wooden chair, his breath a little shallow.

EWAN
Hello?

DOC (V.O.)
...Ewan? Is that actually you? I didn't think I'd get through to the man himself.

Ewan leans back, a small, weary smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

EWAN
It's me, Doc. Hello, mate.

There is a beat of silence on the line. DOC is taken aback.

DOC (V.O.)
(Softly)
"Mate." It's not the sort of word that I expect you to use.

EWAN
(A dry, wheezing chuckle)
It's a nice change from being a monument, isn't it? To be honest, it's a relief to hear your voice, Doc. Usually, it's some journalist wanting a quote on the state of the Labour Party, or a middle-man from the industry trying to sell me back my own history. You're a sight for sore ears.

DOC (V.O.)
I was calling to see if you were up for a visit. I've been to see the Padstow May Pole. There was some nice music there. I took some great photos.

Ewan looks toward the stairs and frowns. He looks at the sofa in the living room, where a blanket is

neatly folded.

EWAN
I'd like that, Doc, even though I think that Padstow is just a load of poncing about. But... not just yet, Doc. The engine's misfiring a bit lately. For every day for a while now, I've had to go and lie down for a few hours. The body is staging a small counter-revolution against the will.

DOC (V.O.)
(Concerned)
Of course. I hope that it's nothing serious.

EWAN
I hope not too. My heart's gone through a lot in all these years. Give it a week or two. Let's wait until I'm feeling a bit more like the Street Singer and less like a May Pole dancer.

DOC (V.O.)
I'll hold you to that. I enjoyed your last cassette by the way. You've really used some new music there. Things that I didn't expect from the daddy of the folk revival.

EWAN
I enjoyed making it. I learnt from the South Africans who I worked with and I learnt from my own children as well.

DOC (V.O.)
Great. Well, I won't keep you. Take care of yourself, Ewan.

EWAN
I will. Goodbye, mate.

EWAN slowly lowers the phone back onto the cradle. He stands up, steadying himself against the wall, and begins the slow walk toward the sofa.

62 INT. MACCOLL HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN - DAY (OCTOBER 1989) **62**

The kitchen is quiet, save for the low hum of the refrigerator and the scratching of a pen. The table is vanished under a mountain of envelopes, telegrams, formal cards and ragged, handwritten notes.

PEGGY sits at the head of the table, her glasses

perched on her nose. NEILL and CALLUM sit with her, opening the mail in a rhythmic, somber silence.

PEGGY picks up a thick, cream-colored envelope. She slides a finger under the flap and pulls out a piece of heavy stationery.

PEGGY
This one’s from the National Union of Mineworkers.

She scans the text. At the bottom, the signature is bold and unmistakable.

PEGGY
It’s signed by Arthur Scargill. He says the labour movement has lost its “big hewer”. He thanks Ewan for carrying the lamp for the miners through some very dark tunnels in 1984 and 1985. As Ewan was an honorary member of the NUM, I am entitled to the Union’s support as his widow.

She sets it aside, her hand trembling slightly. Callum hands her a typed letter on Manchester CND letterhead.

CALLUM
This just arrived. It’s from David Boulton.

Peggy reads it silently. A small, weary smile touches her lips.

PEGGY
He says he’s glad he got Ewan’s words on telly, even if they spent half the time arguing. He says Ewan was a great journeyman through an incredible life and made a wonderful contribution to the campaign to ban the bomb.

Finally, she opens a letter with the logo of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London.

PEGGY
They’re already receiving the donations. People aren't sending flowers, Neill. They’re sending checks for the front-line states. The Movement says the “MacColl Fund” is already enough to kit out a mobile clinic in the townships.

Peggy looks at the empty chair at the end of the table.

PEGGY
He’d have liked that. He always hated things that wilted. He wanted something that could fight.

63 **EXT. CEMETERY - SALFORD - DAY (OCTOBER 1989)** **63**

The sky is a heavy, bruised grey. A fine, cold drizzle falls, the kind that doesn't soak you so much as it hangs in the air like a shroud.

There are no television cameras. No press. No grand orations. Just a small knot of people gathered on a hillside overlooking the industrial sprawl.

PEGGY stands at the front, wrapped in a dark coat, her face a mask of exhausted dignity. Beside her are NEILL, CALLUM and KITTY, huddled together against the damp.

Sitting just behind the family are their new friends, FIROZ and TUNDE.

A few paces away, JEAN NEWLOVE stands with HAMISH and KIRSTY.

Further back, a solitary figure watches: JOAN LITTLEWOOD, looking older.

DOC ROWE stands near the back, his pockets heavy with the tapes he has brought along for others. He sits next to BRUCE DUNNET and IAN MacGREESON.

There is no priest. No liturgy.

NEILL
(Quietly)
He didn't want a service. He just wanted the ground.

The coffin is simple wood. As the pallbearers lower it into the dark clay, the only sound is the distant, rhythmic clatter of a freight train on the Manchester Ship Canal line and the muffled sob of a child.

The mourners begin to turn away.

64 **EXT. SALFORD STREETS – CONTINUOUS** **64**

The mourners go out into the red-brick terraces, the towering cranes of the docks and the smoky horizon of the city.

The singing fades into the natural sounds of the

city: the hiss of bus brakes and the shout of a drunken man.

65 INT. THE SALFORD ARMS - PUB — 1989 **65**

The pub is a cathedral of dark wood, etched glass, and the smell of spilled ale and damp wool. The funeral party has retreated here, huddled in a back snug. PEGGY, NEILL, CALLUM and the veterans of the revival sit around circular tables crowded with pints of bitter.

The grief is beginning to thaw into that peculiar, rowdy warmth of a wake. IAN MACGREESON and BRUCE DUNNET sit near the hearth, leaning in close.

BRUCE
It felt too quiet, didn’t it? To put a man like that in the ground without a roar.

IAN
He wanted it private, Bruce. But look at us. We’re whispering in a corner like we’ve stolen something. It’s a shame we couldn't have had a real public event. A proper broadside for the old man.

At the table, NEILL starts to hum a low, familiar drone. A boot taps the floorboards. Then, a voice rises, clear and unapologetic.

PEGGY & FAMILY
(Singing)
I met my love by the gasworks croft
Dreamed a dream by the old canal

The voices swell. The old friends join in, their harmonies rough-edged and lived-in.

ALL
Dirty old town
Dirty old town

The door to the snug swings open. A group of YOUNG LADS in their early twenties, wearing oversized jackets and carrying pool cues, stare in, bewildered.

YOUNG LAD
What are you lot doing? Why are you singing The Pogues in here?

The singing falters, then stops. NEILL looks up, half-amused, half-annoyed.

NEILL
It’s not The Pogues, mate. It’s Ewan MacColl. We just buried him this afternoon.

The Young Lad blinks, looking at his mates.

YOUNG LAD
Ewan who? Don’t you mean Kirsty MacColl? Is Kirsty here?

NEILL
I’m afraid that she left straight after the funeral. Sorry, she’s already gone.

The YOUNG LADS look disappeared. Sneering at the folk songs, they go back to play pool.

A heavy silence falls. PEGGY looks down at her drink. IAN MACGREESON shakes his head, a grim smile on his face.

IAN
(To Bruce)
You see? That’s the man we just buried. After he wrote all these songs that everyone know, there’s still millions who don’t know his name.

The lads shrug and retreat back to the pool table. BRUCE slams his hand down on the table, the glasses rattling.

BRUCE
No. We can’t have that. We can’t let the dust settle on him that fast.

IAN
I agree. We need something more than a one-off. We should have an annual event. Something near the old Singers’ Club in London.

BRUCE
(Eyes brightening)
For his birthday. Or the anniversary of his death. Or hell, both! We’ll gather the old friends, the activists, the singers. We’ll keep the fire jumping the wire, just like he said.

PEGGY
(Raising her glass)
To the "marvellous struggle," then?

IAN & BRUCE
To the struggle.

They clink glasses. In the background, the jukebox starts playing a synthesised pop hit, but in the snug, the old guard starts the second verse of “Dirty Old Town”, louder this time, drowning out the present with the roar of the past.

66 **EXT. RUSSELL SQUARE - LONDON - DAY (JANUARY)** **66**

The cold, sharp light of a London winter settles over the square. The trees are skeletal, the grass frosted.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE DOCUMENTARY STYLE:
A crowd has gathered. This isn't a polished concert; it’s a shivering, breath-misted assembly of the faithful. We see FAMOUS FACES in the crowd—folk legends, veteran actors from the Theatre Workshop days and aging trade unionists in heavy overcoats.

EWAN’s family stands at the front. The Critics’ Club stand around.

They are huddled together, passing around thermoses of tea. Someone strikes a guitar string—the sound is thin in the cold air but carries a weight of history. They begin to sing. Some weep and some smile.

67 **EXT. KINDER SCOUT - THE PEAK DISTRICT – DAY** **67**

A radical shift in geography. We are high up on the moorland, where the wind whips across the dark peat and the gritstone edges. The "Plateau" looms in the mist.

A massive group of HIKERS and SINGERS has gathered for the anniversary of the 1932 MASS TRESPASS. They are dressed in modern waterproofs, bright reds and blues against the brown heather.

They stop at a natural amphitheater in the rocks. A young woman with a concertina starts the rhythm. A hundred voices join in, echoing off the cloughs and the crags.

CROWD
(Singing in unison)
I’m a rambler, I’m a rambler from Manchester way
I get all my pleasure the hard moorland way

The camera soars upward, catching the scale of the landscape—the vast, open "forbidden" land that Ewan helped win for the people. The song grows louder, a roar of reclaimed heritage that the wind cannot blow away.

CROWD
(singing)
I may be a wage-slave on Monday
But I am a free man on Sunday!

The screen fades to a deep, earthy black.

68 **WHITE TEXT APPEARS:** 68

“The struggle itself has been good. The struggle has been marvellous.”
— EWAN MACCOLL

BELOW IT:

The annual gatherings of Ewan’s friends continue each year on his birthday in January and on the day of his death in October.

All his children went on to become musicians.